Special Muhammad Ali Memorial Issue

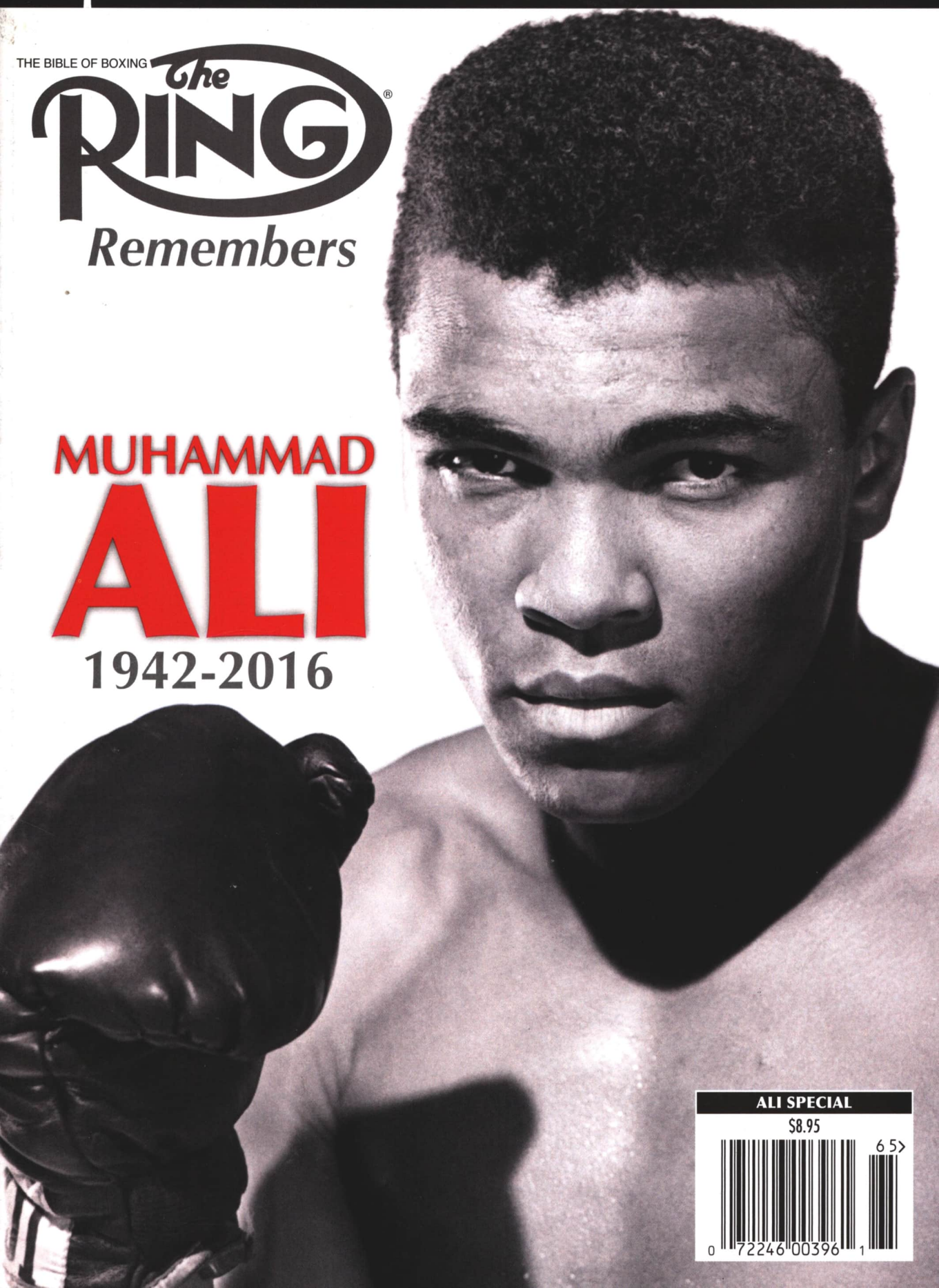
THE BIBLE OF BOXING

The RING®

Remembers

# MUHAMMAD ALI

1942-2016



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# The RING Remembers MUHAMMAD Ali

Muhammad Ali, who had long suffered from Parkinson's disease, died at age 74 at a Phoenix-area hospital on June 3, 2016. The cultural icon leaves a unique legacy, one of a truly great fighter with unmatched charisma and the willingness to risk everything to stand up for his convictions. This special issue is THE RING's tribute to "The Greatest."


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# Boxing Was Vehicle That Allowed Ali to Pedal to Global Glory

*By Bernard Fernandez*

Fate intervenes in our lives in so many unexpected ways. Would Muhammad Ali have become the most recognizable athlete of the 20th century if his brand-new bicycle hadn't been stolen when he was 12, and still unaware of his eventual destiny? Would the future three-time heavyweight champion have lived out his life in virtual anonymity as Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr. had not a caring Louisville, Ky., police officer suggested he channel his anger over the missing bike into a constructive outlet like, say, boxing?

It might be inferred that that bike thief—whose identity never was determined—did as much to shape the life and legend of boxing's most charismatic figure as did Ali's longtime trainer, Angelo Dundee, or his signature opponents Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier, George Foreman and Ken Norton, or his controversial religious advisers Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X, or the legions of young, disaffected people in the turbulent 1960s and '70swho came to view the handsome, outspoken fighter as a symbol of their own struggle against what they believed to be a repressive American society.

Boxing was the principal platform that made Muhammad Ali who and what he was, but it was not the only one. His almost incomprehensible celebrity—some would say notoriety—was also fueled by his conversion to Islam, his refusal to be inducted into the United States Army because of his opposition to the Vietnam War and his 43-month forced exile from boxing at the height of his career because of what his supporters considered to be as courageous and principled a stand as anything he achieved in the ring.

Muhammad Ali—self-proclaimed "Greatest of All Time," political and social activist, polarizing symbol of one of the most divisive eras in American history—finally was outpointed by the one foe, the Grim Reaper, that no boxer can fend off indefinitely. Ali—(years old) and in declining health for decades because of the debilitating effects of Parkinson's syndrome, passed away on June 3, 2016, at 74 years old. But as is the case with an infinitesimally small percentage of human beings, he is likely to be as or more renowned in death as he was in life.

The gradual metamorphosis of Muhammad Ali, boastful firebrand, into a sympathetic, respected and, yes, widely beloved figure might be surprising to those who once were on the opposite side of that yawning philosophical divide, but it is indicative of the transformative effects time can have on someone's image as public perceptions shift. In the interim since his final boxing match, a 10-round points loss to Trevor Berbick on Dec. 11, 1981, in Nassau, the Bahamas, Ali had been presented the Presidential Citizens Medal by President George W. Bush on Jan. 25, 2005, and the Liberty Medal in Philadelphia, in celebration of the 225th anniversary of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, on Sept. 13, 2012. He undertook missions to developing countries to deliver food and medical supplies, in addition to serving as a fundraiser for Special Olympics and the Muhammad Ali Parkinson Research Center in Phoenix. He was named "Sportsman of the 20th Century" by *Sports Illustrated* and "Sports Personality of the 20th Century by the British Broadcasting Company. He even helped facilitate the freeing of 15 Americans and two Canadians during a face-to-face meeting with Iraq's brutal dictator, Saddam Hussein, in Baghdad in 1990.

At the Liberty Medal ceremony, Joe Louis Barrow II, son of the late, great heavyweight champion Joe Louis, acknowledged the difference—and the similarity—between his father and Ali, who was seated to the side wearing dark glasses and a dark suit.

"Like my father when you entered the sport of boxing, the world was in turmoil, much as it is today," Barrow said. "The two of you made opposite choices—my father choosing to volunteer in World War II and you, for religious convictions, refusing to serve in Vietnam. In different ways, you both defended the ideals of the Constitution. But time has shown you were both on the right side of history."

There might be some continuing dissent as to that assertion, but beyond dispute is Ali's status as one of the finest fighters ever to lace up a pair of padded gloves. His accomplishments are impressive enough for those who choose only to regard him on a statistical basis. As an amateur he had 100 wins in 108 amateur bouts and claimed six Kentucky Golden Gloves titles, two National Golden Gloves titles, an AAU national title and an Olympic gold medal in Rome in 1960. Moving on to the pros, he was 56-5 with 37 KOs, thrice won the heavyweight championship, was unanimously inducted as a charter member into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1990. But those figures alone do not begin to describe a transcendental figure who was, simply, an original beyond replication.

There were two Alis, really. There was the lithe, sleek, pre-exile version whose balletic movements and blurring hand speed transformed a brutal sport into an art form, and the older, heavier model whose ability to absorb frightful punishment and come back firing was no less mesmerizing. Choosing between the two

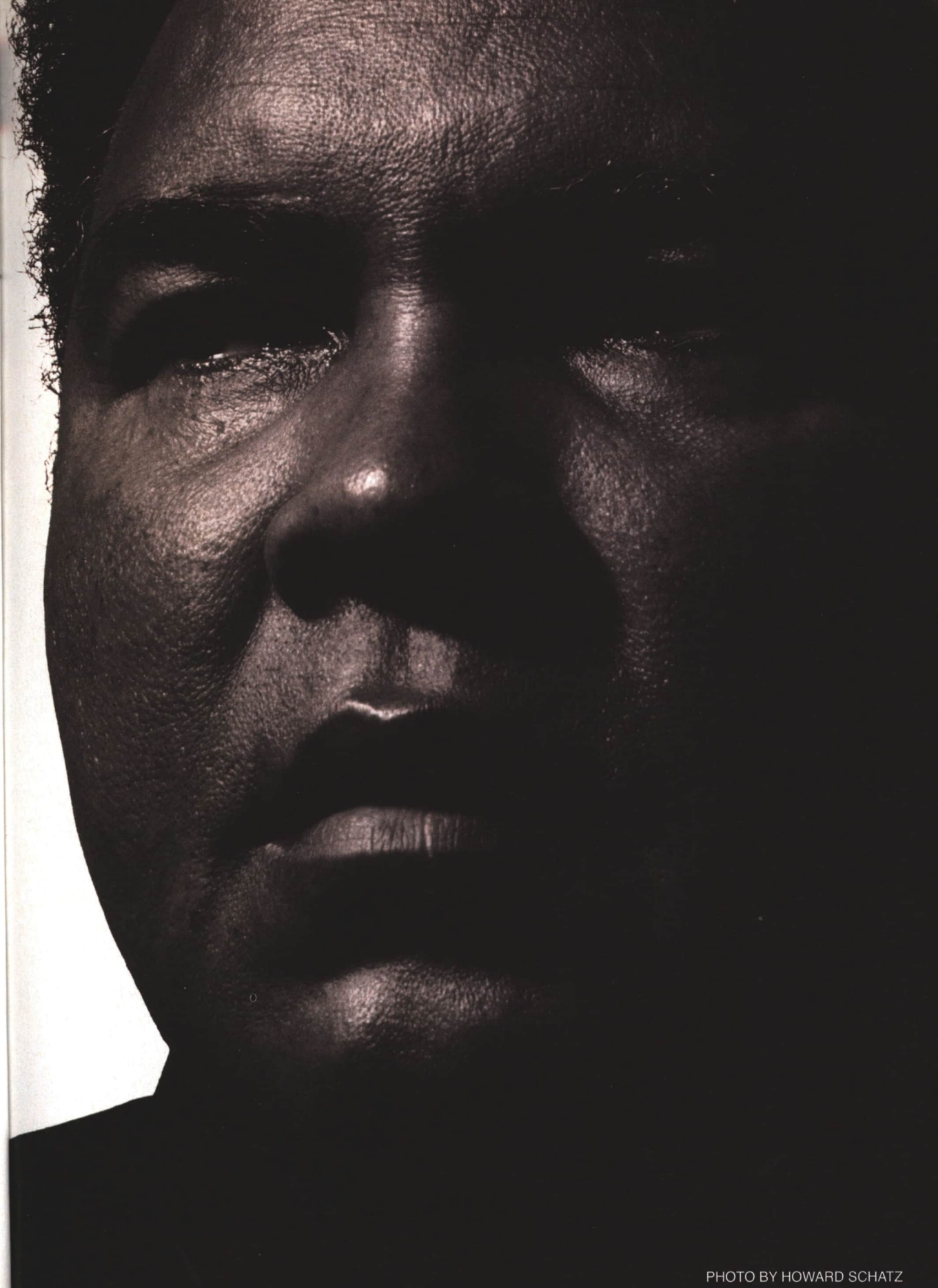


PHOTO BY HOWARD SCHATZ

Alis is like asking an Elvis Presley fan to decide between the rebellious, hip-shaking 1950s rock 'n' icon and the plumper, jumpsuited incarnation playing Vegas in the '70s.

"Ali before the layoff was a better fighter than Ali after," his late trainer, Dundee, said in 1995. "What a lot of people don't realize, and it's sad, is we never saw him at his peak. The Ali who fought Cleveland Williams and Zora Folley was the best he could be at that time, but he was getting bigger and stronger and more experienced in the ring. What was he, 25 years old when they made him stop? Those next three years would have been his peak. If he had continued getting better at the rate he was going, God only knows how great he would have been."

So all fight fans should now offer silent thanks to that bike thief who made off with Cassius Clay, Jr.'s shiny, new ride in the summer of 1954. Young Cassius had pedaled to the Louisville Service Club, where local businessmen were giving away free balloons and ice cream to the kids. When he discovered his bike was missing, an incensed Clay was directed to a Louisville police officer, Joe Martin, who was also the boxing coach at the nearby Columbia Gym.

"If I find out who stole my bike, I'm gonna whup him," Clay told Martin.

Replied Martin: "You better learn to fight before you start fighting."

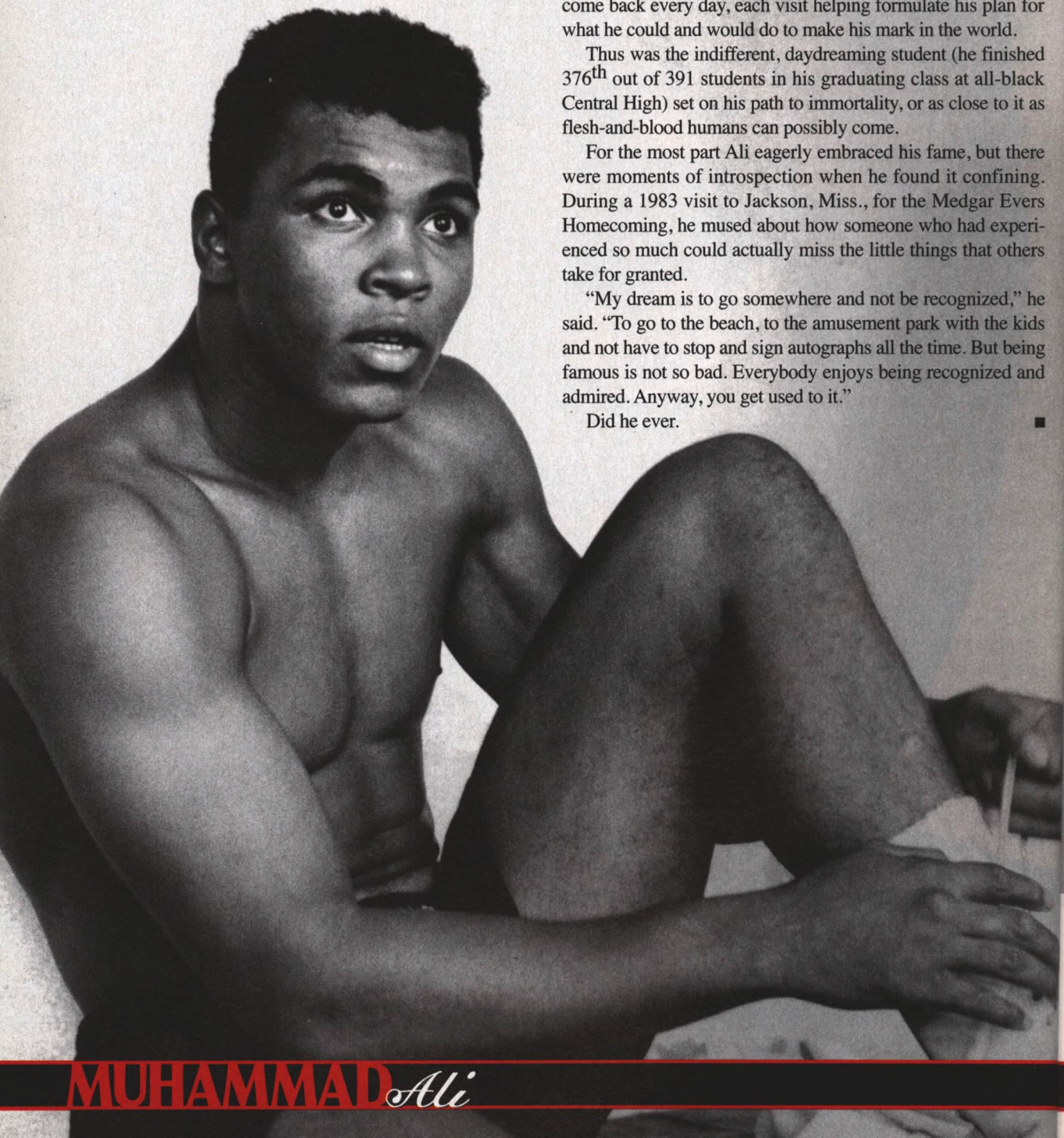
So Clay arrived the next afternoon at the Columbia Gym, where he became enthralled with the rat-tat-tat sound of other kids hitting the speed bags, the thud of their punches on the heavy bags, the grace of their rope-skipping. He continued to come back every day, each visit helping formulate his plan for what he could and would do to make his mark in the world.

Thus was the indifferent, daydreaming student (he finished 376th out of 391 students in his graduating class at all-black Central High) set on his path to immortality, or as close to it as flesh-and-blood humans can possibly come.

For the most part Ali eagerly embraced his fame, but there were moments of introspection when he found it confining. During a 1983 visit to Jackson, Miss., for the Medgar Evers Homecoming, he mused about how someone who had experienced so much could actually miss the little things that others take for granted.

"My dream is to go somewhere and not be recognized," he said. "To go to the beach, to the amusement park with the kids and not have to stop and sign autographs all the time. But being famous is not so bad. Everybody enjoys being recognized and admired. Anyway, you get used to it."

Did he ever. ■



# Quotables

*A collection of quotes by and about Muhammad Ali*

"I shook up the world, I'm the king of the world. You must listen to me. I am the greatest! I can't be beat!"

-Muhammad Ali, after beating Sonny Liston

"The real enemy of my people is here. I will not disgrace my religion, my people, or myself by becoming a tool to enslave those who are fighting for their own justice, freedom, and equality."

-Muhammad Ali, on being drafted

"It's just a job. Grass grows, birds fly, waves pound the sand. I beat people up."

-Muhammad Ali

"I'm so fast that last night I turned off the light switch in my hotel room and was in bed before the room was dark."

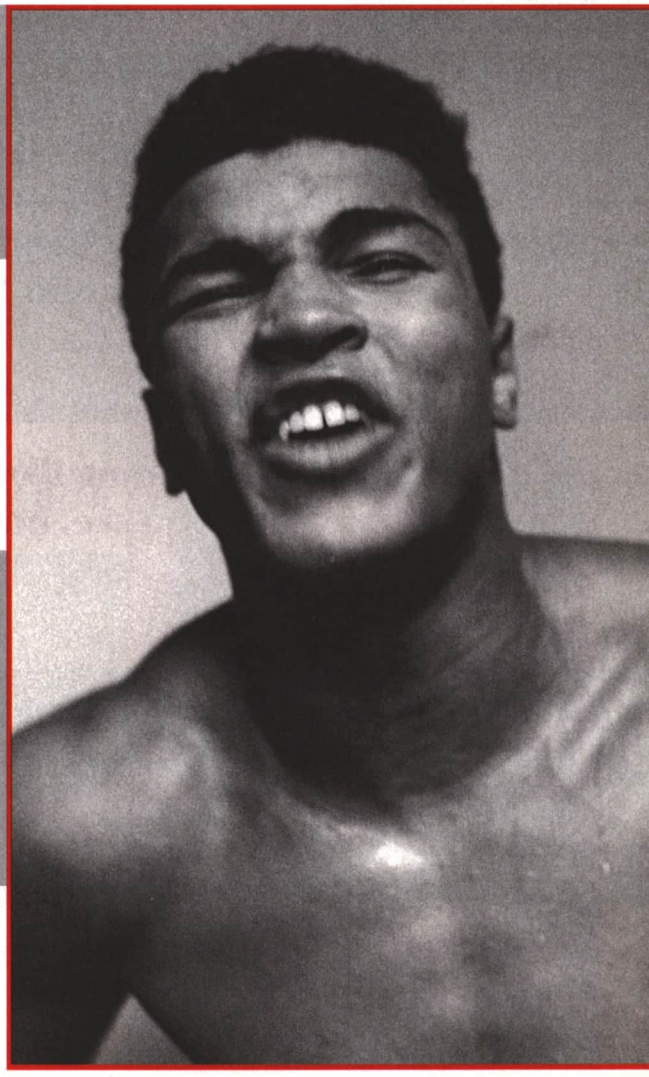
-Muhammad Ali

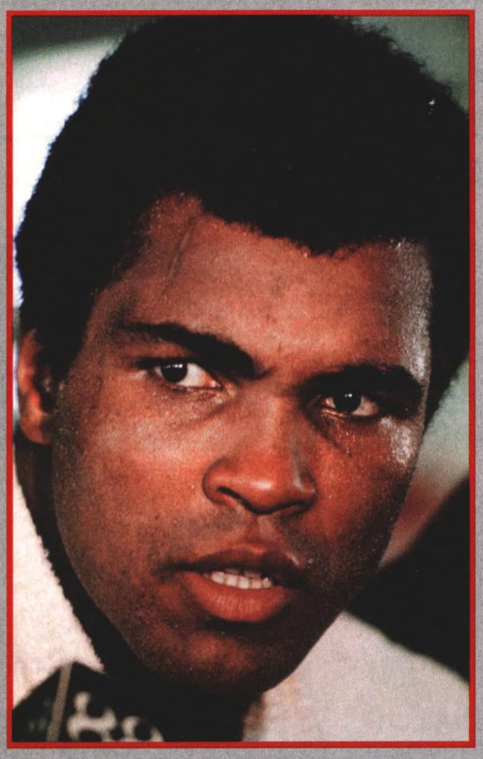
"The fight is won or lost far away from witnesses—behind the lines, in the gym, and out there on the road, long before I dance under those lights."

-Muhammad Ali

"The man who has no imagination has no wings."

-Muhammad Ali





Last night I had a dream,
When I got to Africa,
I had one hell of a rumble.
I had to beat Tarzan's behind first,
For claiming to be King of the Jungle.
For this fight, I've wrestled with alligators,
I've tussled with a whale.
I done handcuffed lightning
And throwed thunder in jail.
You know I'm bad.
Just last week, I murdered a rock,
Injured a stone, Hospitalized a brick.
I'm so mean, I make medicine sick.
I'm so fast, man,
I can run through a hurricane
and don't get wet.
When George Foreman meets me,
He'll pay his debt.
I can drown the drink of water,
and kill a dead tree.
Wait till you see Muhammad Ali.

-A poem by Ali about his match with George Foreman

**"Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. The hands can't hit what the eyes can't see. Now you see, now you don't. George thinks he will, but I know he won't."**

**-Muhammad Ali**

"I hit him so hard that I made him cry. He looked at me and said, 'I'm going to get you for that.' I respected him then, and I respect him now."

-George Foreman

**"If you ever dream of beating me...You better wake up and apologize"**

**-Muhammad Ali**

"Muhammad Ali was the kind of guy you either loved or hated, but you wanted to see him. I happen to really love him. He brought boxing to another level and always made you laugh."

-Gerry Cooney

"You look at someone like Gandhi, and he glowed. Martin Luther King glowed. Muhammad Ali glows. I think that's from being bright all the time, and trying to be brighter."

-Jay-Z

"Muhammad Ali—he was a magnificent fighter and he was an icon...Every head must bow, every knee must bend, every tongue must confess, thou art the greatest, the greatest of all time, Muhammad, Muhammad Ali."

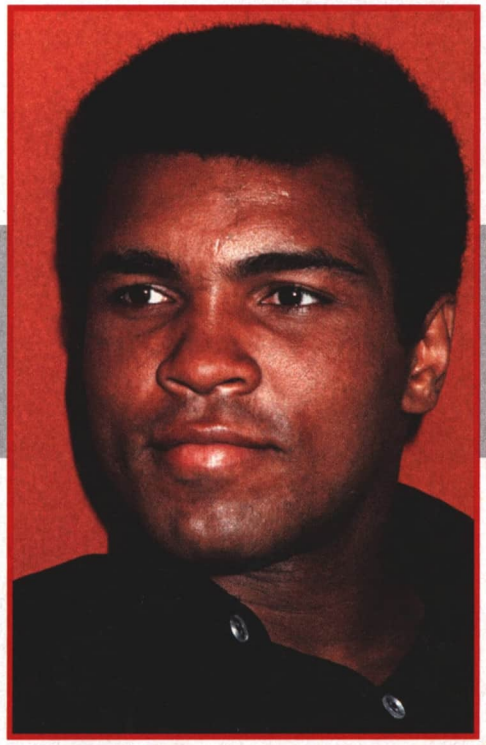
-Don King

"That was always the difference between Muhammad Ali and the rest of us. He came, he saw, and if he didn't entirely conquer—he came as close as anybody we are likely to see in the lifetime of this doomed generation."

-Hunter S. Thompson

"The real mystery, I guess, is how he stayed so pretty. It probably had to do with his beautiful soul."

-President George W. Bush

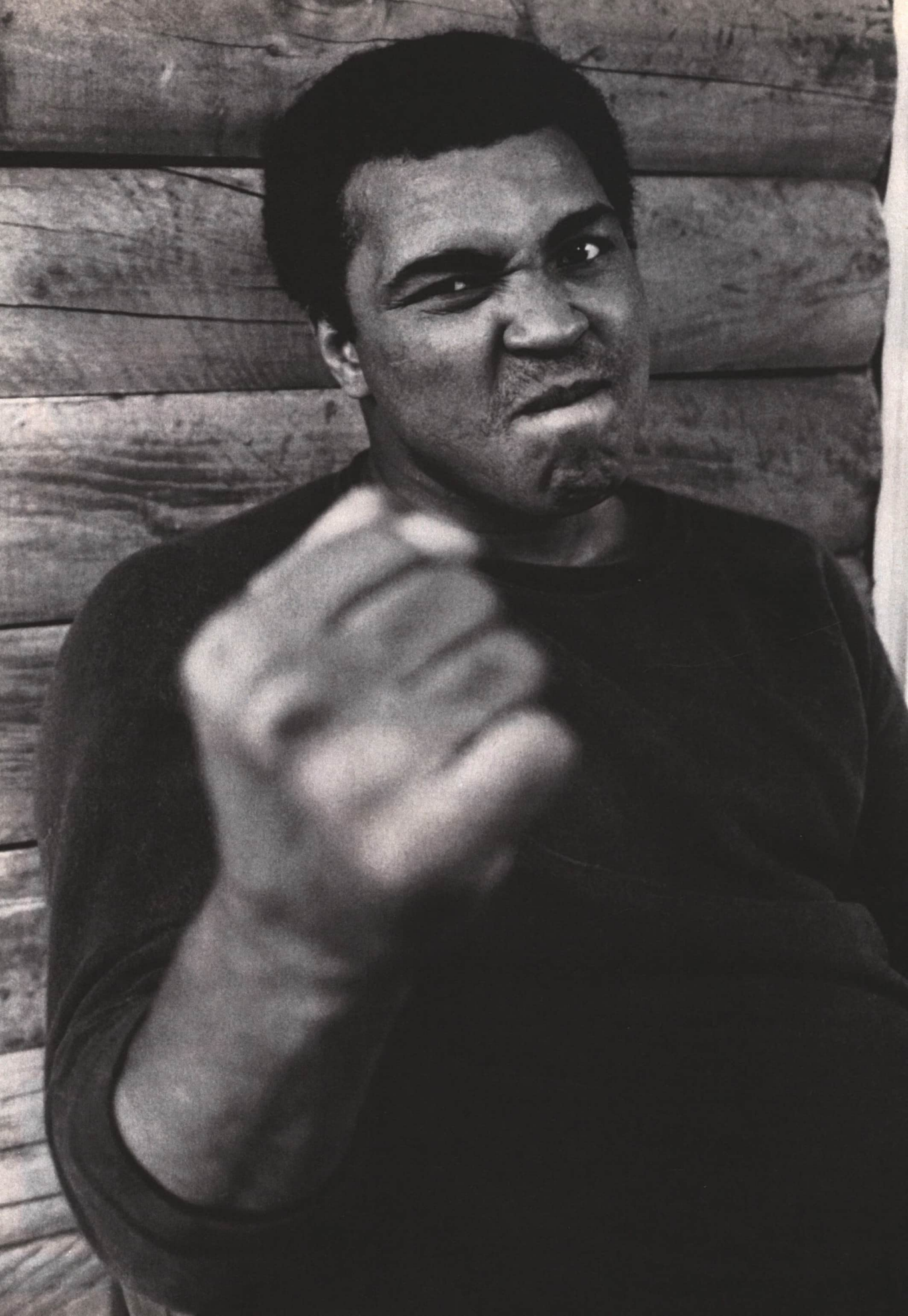


"In fifty years of covering the sport, of course Muhammad Ali is by far the dominant figure."

-Dick Schaap

"Champions aren't made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them: a desire, a dream, a vision."

-Muhammad Ali



# The Life & Times of MUHAMMAD Ali

JOE MARTIN WAS a policeman in Louisville, Kentucky. On the side, he ran the Columbia Gymnasium where the boys of Louisville punched bags and sparred with boxing gloves so big that the smaller boys had trouble holding up their hands. Martin had as much to do with the eventual success of Cassius Clay as anybody, maybe more than anybody.

Martin clearly remembered that day in the summer of 1954 when a skinny kid stumbled into his gym. Big tears streamed down the face of 12-year-old Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr. He was crying because someone had stolen the bicycle his father had paid $60 for two days before. Martin stopped what he was doing and knelt down to comfort the boy. When the boy finished sobbing out his story, he said something that impressed Martin: "If I catch that boy who took my bike, I'm gonna whup him good!"

Martin told young Cassius that he had better learn how to fight before he tried to whip anybody. It was the start of a relationship between Cassius Clay and Joe Martin that would last six years. Cassius became one of the boys at the Columbia gym.

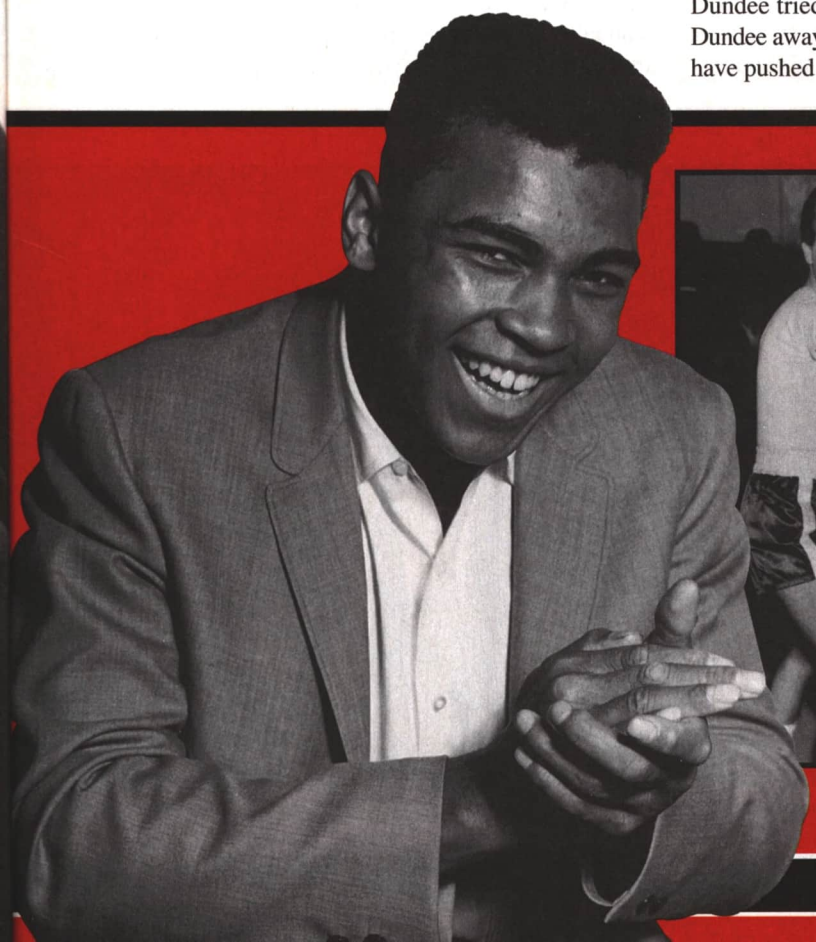
Joe Martin was a Spartan in his gym. His word was absolute law: "When I say it's raining outside, I don't want anybody running to the window to find out."

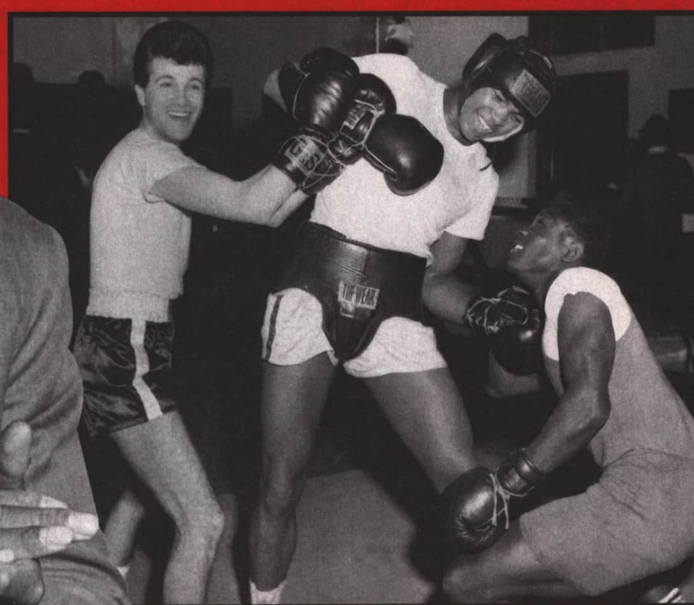
Cassius ate and slept at home, but he lived at the gym. He received love and sympathy at home; at the gym, he listened and he learned. "I made him and his brother Rudy toe the mark," Martin recalls.

Cassius performed on Martin's weekly amateur boxing shows, and soon he was good enough to be pointed out on the streets of Louisville as "that kid with the fast hands." His work in the ring gave Clay status, but Martin didn't change.

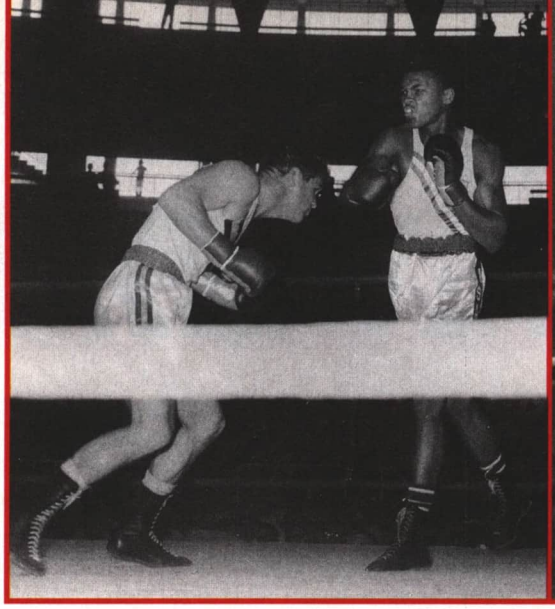
"That boy was always a loudmouth," Martin said. "Sometimes I had to shut him up. If he got wise with me, I'd crack him. That boy always needed discipline."

One day, when Cassius was on the verge of becoming heavyweight champion of the world, Martin was in Miami watching him train. He noticed that when trainer Angelo Dundee tried to get Clay to put on his robe, Cassius shoved Dundee away. "If he'd have done that to me," Martin said, "I'd have pushed his head through an iron pipe."





*Actor/singer Tommy Sands tries to prevent Clay from puttin' a whuppin' on Emile Griffith in 1962.*



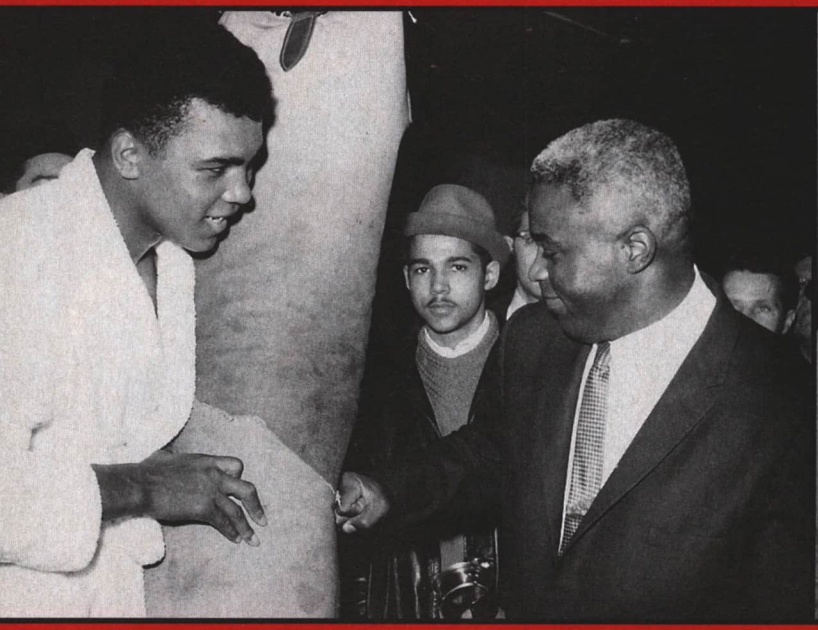
*Cassius Clay outboxes Gennadiy Shatkov in the quarterfinal round in the light heavyweight class at the 1960 Rome Olympics (left). With gold hanging from his neck, Clay stands head and shoulders above the runners-up on the medal platform (right). Soon after the Olympics, Clay signs his first professional contract, with a consortium of 11 Louisville, Kentucky, businessmen (opposite).*

There may have been cause for Martin's harsh words. Besides helping Cassius cut his boxing teeth, Martin had carefully prepared him for the 1960 Rome Olympics, where Clay won a gold medal. It was assumed that when Cassius turned professional, he would be Martin's fighter. Instead, he signed with a syndicate of 11 Louisville businessmen for a $10,000 bonus, a guaranteed annual salary of $4,000 for the first two years and $6,000 for each of the next four years.

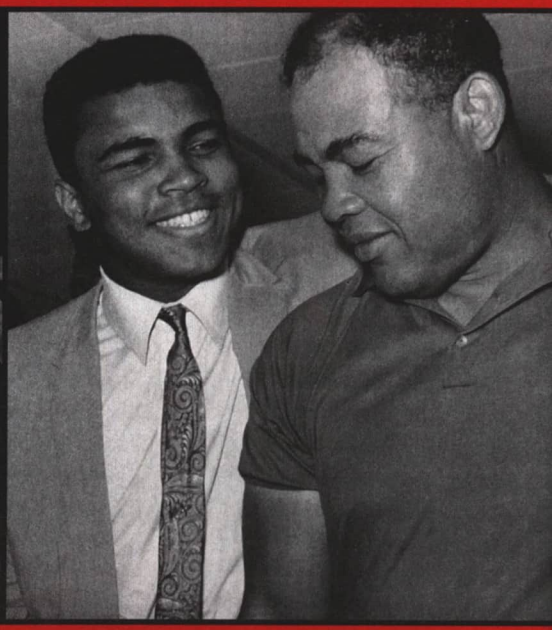
William Faversham, an executive for a leading liquor company, was the head of the syndicate. A shrewd, understanding man, Faversham wanted to make sure Cassius would have financial security. "We don't want him to wind up like Joe Louis," Faversham said. "A part of his earnings will go into a pension fund which he cannot touch until he is 35 years old, or when he stops fighting. And we will see to it that his taxes are paid on time."

Bill Faversham, who knew Clay as well as anybody, once did this word picture: "In general, the world frightens Cassius, but, in particular, being Cassius Clay frightens him most of all. You must remember there is not a bad bone in his body. Why, his idea of a big time is four scoops of ice cream and a double orange juice—straight!"

Faversham could have been justified in saying less complimentary things about the youngster he helped turn into a great champion. Clay divorced himself from Bill and the syndicate after he became famous. He converted to Islam, changed his



*Ali could hit, but not like Jackie Robinson.*



*Ali and his idol, Joe Louis, share a moment in 1965.*

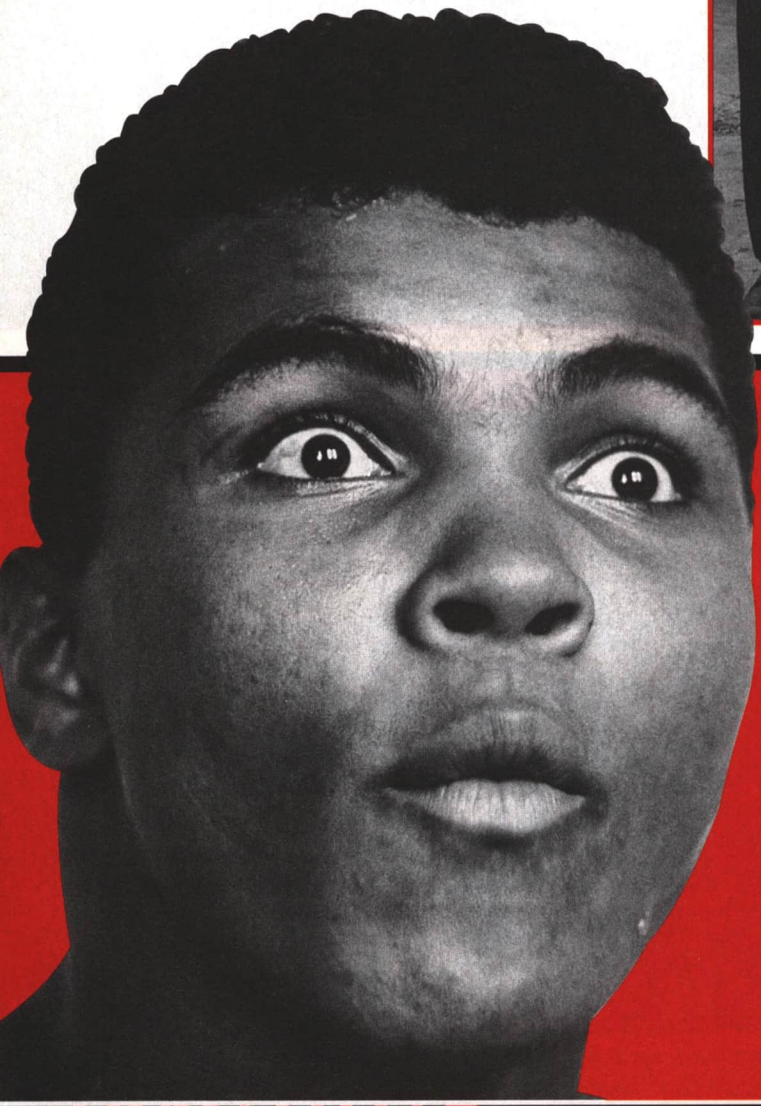
As strong as he was, Ali couldn't budge former bantamweight champ Johnny Coulon.

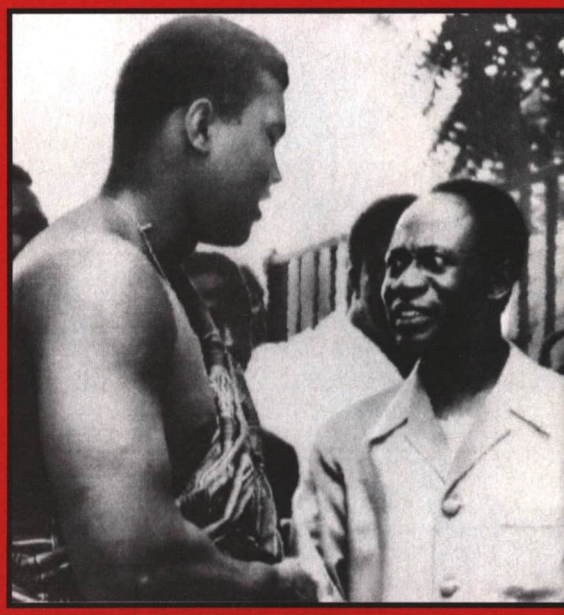
Jimmy Braddock gets the best of this exchange in 1973.

name to Muhammad Ali, and turned his contract over to the Black Muslims.

Muhammad Ali, who refused to answer to the name Cassius Clay because it was a "slave name," left an indelible mark on professional sports. The likes of him had never been seen before, and it is doubtful that it will ever be seen again. The young braggart who captured the public's imagination by reciting his own taunting poetry and predicting the rounds in which his opponents would fall was branded a clown who would vanish as quickly as he had appeared. But the braggart was true to his word and his victims surprisingly often fell exactly when and how he had predicted they would. The clown brand gave way to an aura of invincibility, and Muhammad Ali was called better than even legendary champions Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis. Ali was called by many the greatest boxer who ever lived, and Ali didn't deny it.

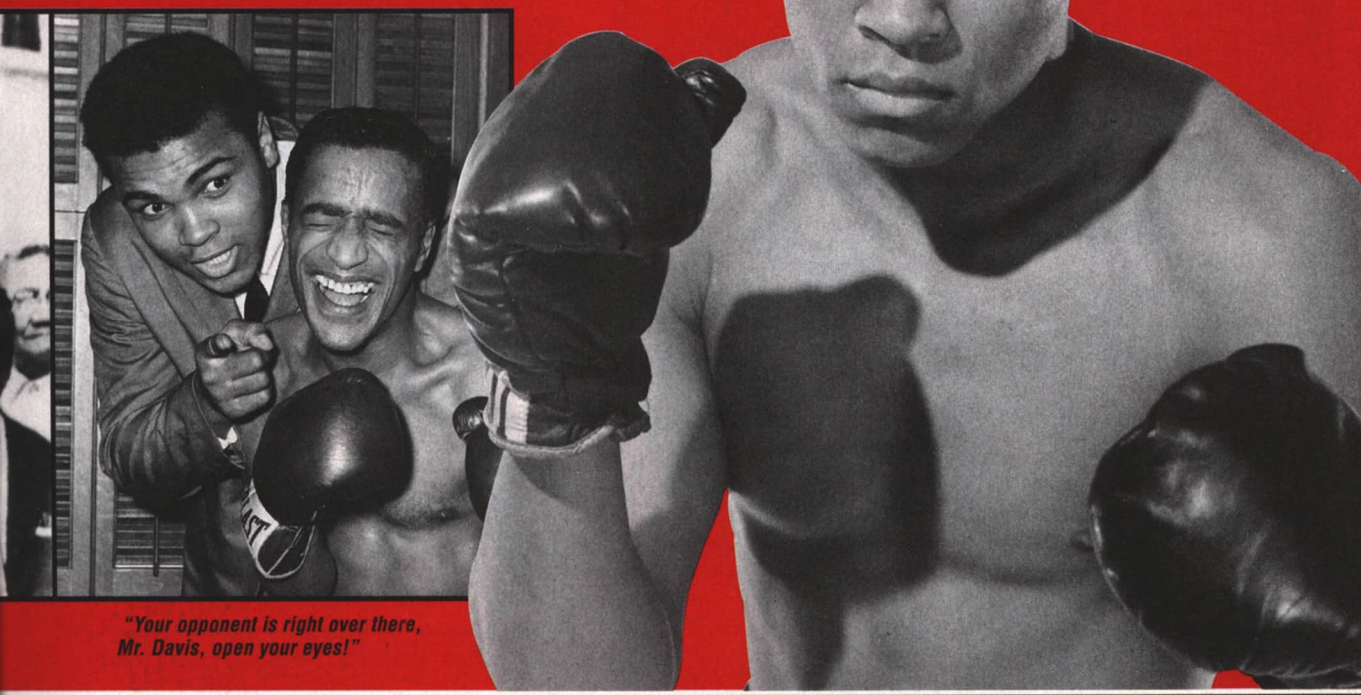
Practically all of Ali's predecessors on the heavyweight throne were spawned in poverty. Cassius Marcellus Clay was born, on January 17, 1942, a Kentucky African-American—but not a poor Kentucky African-American. Most of the signs painted on the store windows and delivery trucks of Louis-





*Replete in a stylish kente, Ali is greeted in Ghana by President Kwame Nkrumah.*

*A family affair: Clay with his parents Cassius and Odessa in 1965 and taking a stroll with his brother Rudolph Valentino and their 99-year-old great-grandmother in 1963 (opposite).*



*"Your opponent is right over there, Mr. Davis, open your eyes!"*

ville bore the signature: "C.M. Clay." It was the signature of Louisville's most accomplished sign painter. It was the signature of the man who fathered Cassius Clay.

C.M. Clay was always a good provider. He bought his first house when he was only 23, and he was as proud of never having been out a day's work in his life as he was of being the father of Cassius Clay. C.M. Clay's family always had plenty of food on the table and clean beds to sleep in.

The bed that Cassius was born in is a four-poster with a gleaming white, starched canopy. The bed was still in use in the new Clay home. "I paid $225 for it," recalled the senior Clay. "I'll bet I could get nearly a thousand dollars if I wanted to sell it."

Bill Faversham and the syndicate hired veteran trainer Angelo Dundee to teach, train, and be Clay's companion. Angelo's instructions were directly to the point: "Make him a champion and keep him out of trouble." Dundee worked cheap because he envisioned big paydays ahead. He was paid $125 a week while Clay was training for a fight. When the fighter wasn't training, Angelo got nothing. But the big paydays came, just as Dundee had expected. It was a good deal for the little trainer who had a knack for keeping fighters happy even during long and arduous training grinds.

Angelo and Clay had known each other before they were formally joined by the Faversham group. Dundee told the story of their first meeting: "I was in Louisville with Willie Pastrano in 1957. Willie was the light heavyweight champion of the world. We were in the hotel room and the phone rang. I answered the phone and I could tell it was a kid on the other end. He told me his name, Cassius Marcellus Clay, and he said he won the gold medal in the Olympics. He wanted to know if he could come up to the room and show me the medal. He told me a lot of things about myself and all my fighters. He said he found out about me watching boxing on TV.

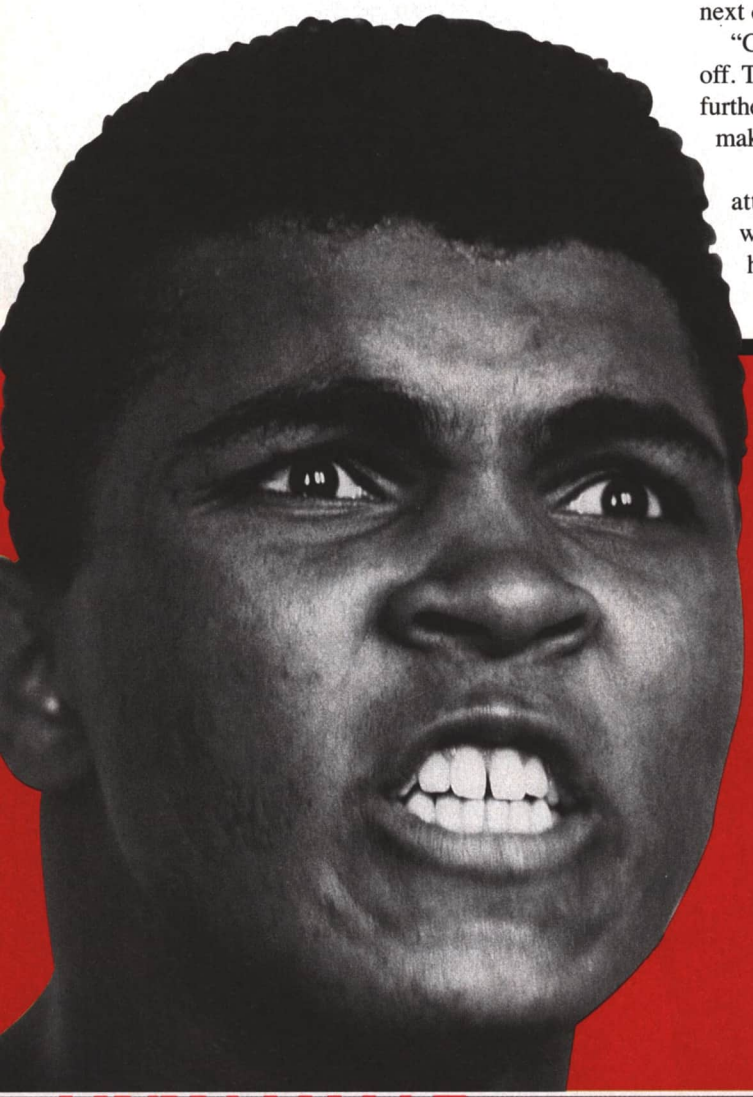
"I told the kid to keep quiet for a minute. I then told Pastrano that there was some kind of nut downstairs who wants to come up. Willie said, 'Let him come.'

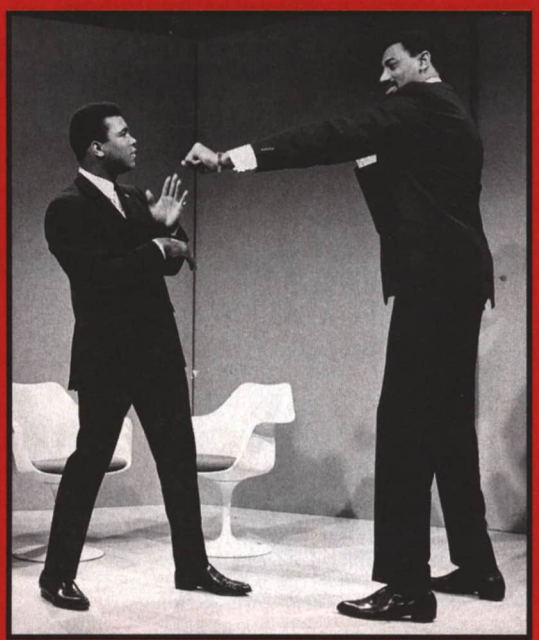
"When Cassius came up, his brother Rudy was with him. They stayed maybe three hours, and all the time Clay was asking Pastrano questions: 'How many miles you run a day? What do you eat for lunch before a fight? How much orange juice do you drink when you train?'

"Clay and Pastrano hit it off right from the beginning. They really dug each other. Cassius begged me to let him box Willie. I told him to ask Willie. Willie said okay, so the next day they boxed in Joe Martin's Columbia gym.

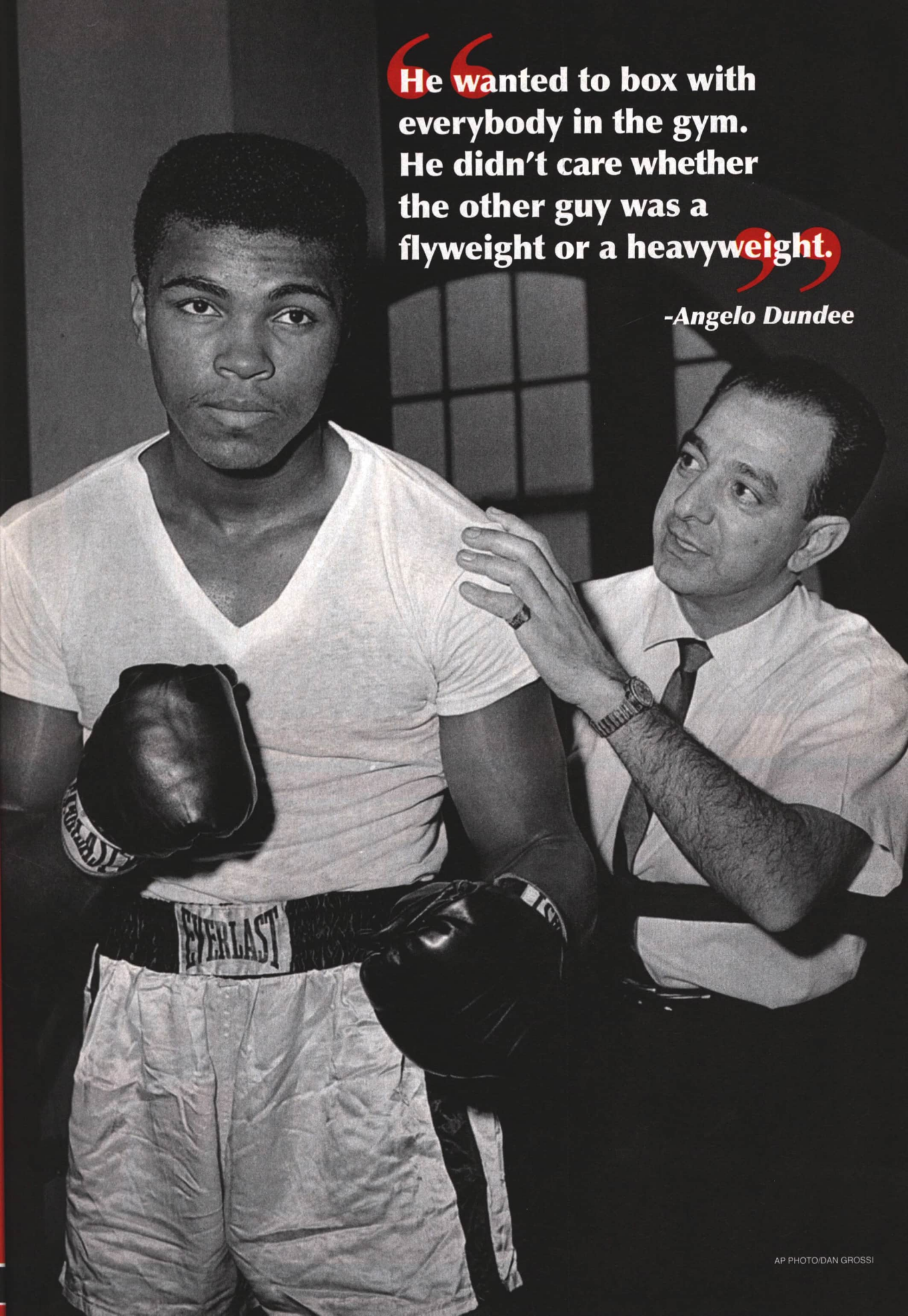
"Clay looked great and Willie looked terrible. He was way off. They only boxed one round because I didn't let it go any further. I told Willie that he looked terrible and Willie didn't make excuses. He said, 'Angie, this kid is real good.'"

Under the watchful eye of Dundee, Clay paid strict attention to business and he learned his trade. Dundee was enthralled by the youngster's dazzling speed, but he was even more enthralled by his burning ambition to become famous.



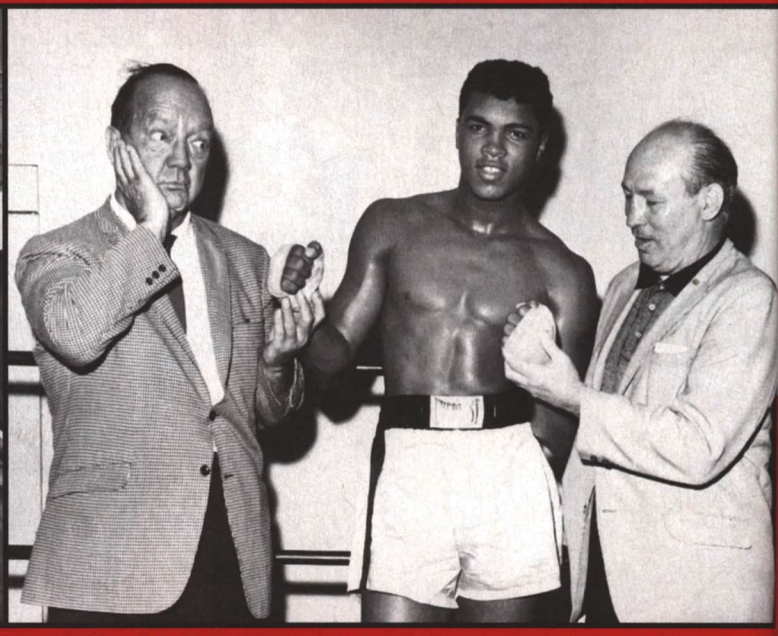


*Talk of a fight against 7'1" Chamberlain wilted over time.*


"He wanted to box with everybody in the gym. He didn't care whether the other guy was a flyweight or a heavyweight."
-Angelo Dundee
EVERLAST
AP PHOTO/DAN GROSSI

*Young Clay frequently stayed in Harlem's Hotel Theresa and was mobbed by adoring fans when he walked the streets of New York City.*

*Floyd Patterson wishes he had that effect on Ali in the ring.*



*Maxie Rosenbloom and Solly Krieger pose with the not-yet-Greatest.*

"I couldn't get him away from the gym," Dundee recalled. "Even after I turned out the lights, he was still shadowboxing or hitting the bag. He wanted to box with everybody in the gym. He didn't care whether the other guy was a flyweight or a heavyweight. 'I need the work,' he kept telling me."

No fighter in recorded history trained harder for a fight than Clay. He averaged 160 rounds of sparring while preparing for an eight-round fight. Most fighters spar about 50 rounds for a 10-round bout.

On October 29, 1960, Clay made his professional debut by outpointing a tough journeyman named Tunney Hunsaker in six rounds in Louisville. Within the next six months, he danced and boxed his way to six consecutive victories, five by knockout.

In June 1961, Cassius and Dundee were in Las Vegas for a 10-round bout with Duke Sabedong. The fact that Cassius won the decision isn't a milestone in his career. What is a milestone, however, is the TV talk show on which Clay appeared before that fight. Appearing on the show with him was the famous pro wrestler, Gorgeous George. It was the last time Cassius would allow anyone else to steal the spotlight from him.

Cassius was fascinated by the way George spoke, how he dressed, how he dyed his hair a golden yellow, how the wrestler handled himself in general. He was so captivated by George that he went to see him wrestle the following evening. He was even more captivated by the number of people who had jammed into the arena to see the man with the golden hair.

The experience with Gorgeous George was to change Clay's entire personality, and his life as well. He started to emulate George. He never stopped talking and bragging about how great he was. The cast had been molded and the new Cassius Clay started to emerge. The world would never be the same again.

Cassius continued to win his fights by comfortable margins. Promoters around the country began to take notice of the Louisville kid with the fast hands and the big mouth. But there were skeptics. One big unknown factor was Clay's durability. Another was his courage. Could he take a good shot on the chin? Would he fight back when hurt, like Dempsey did against Firpo, or would he find the nearest aisle and run?

The answers came in Clay's bouts against tough South American Alex Miteff and the "sneak" punching Sonny Banks. Miteff, known for his brutal body attack, raised lumps on Cassius' ribcage, but Clay held on and stopped Miteff in the sixth round. Banks' specialty was separating an opponent from his senses by clubbing him on the jaw with his right fist. Sonny fooled Cassius. Instead of hitting him on the jaw with a right, he clubbed Clay with a left to the jaw and—*crash!*—down went Cassius. In the opinion of Dundee and other knowledgeable boxing men, the moment of truth had arrived. Would Clay

*Ali the Porter carried his own luggage, but he certainly didn't carry Doug Jones at Madison Square Garden.*

get up, would he roll over on his back and be counted out, or would he look for the aisle and run?

Clay's eyes rolled as he was going down. But when he hit the floor, it was as if a trigger had been pulled. His eyes cleared immediately and he bounded up like a rubber ball. Dundee was not only relieved, he was aghast. "He was just fantastic," remembered Angelo. Dundee's feeling of relief turned to pure joy in the fourth round when Cassius KO'd Banks.

The year 1962 was a great one for Cassius Clay. He racked up six knockouts in six fights, and the flip, bragging poetry that flowed from his lips amused the nation. Before he took on Archie Moore, Clay chanted:

*"I'll say it again, I've said it before:*
*Archie Moore will fall in four."*

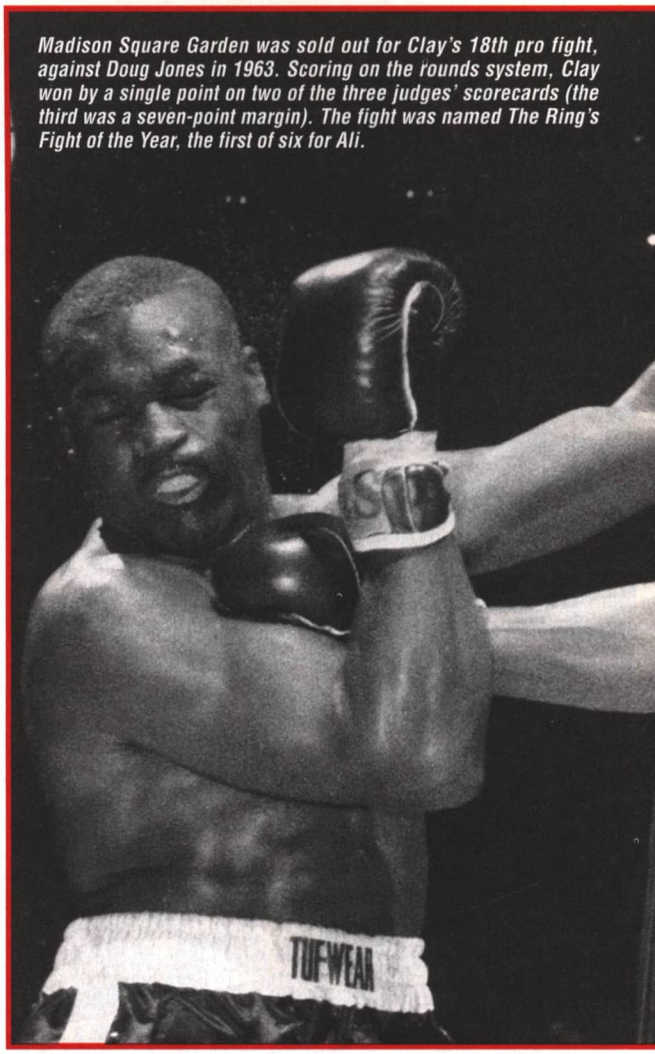
And Archie Moore fell in four. The live gate at the Los Angeles Sports Arena was a California record: $182,599, with an additional $223,455 from closed-circuit television.

Seated in the third row was heavyweight champion Sonny Liston. As the victorious Cassius passed the champion, he stopped, waved his finger under Sonny's broad nose, and said, "Take care, little boy. I need you. I'm gonna whup you like I'm your daddy."

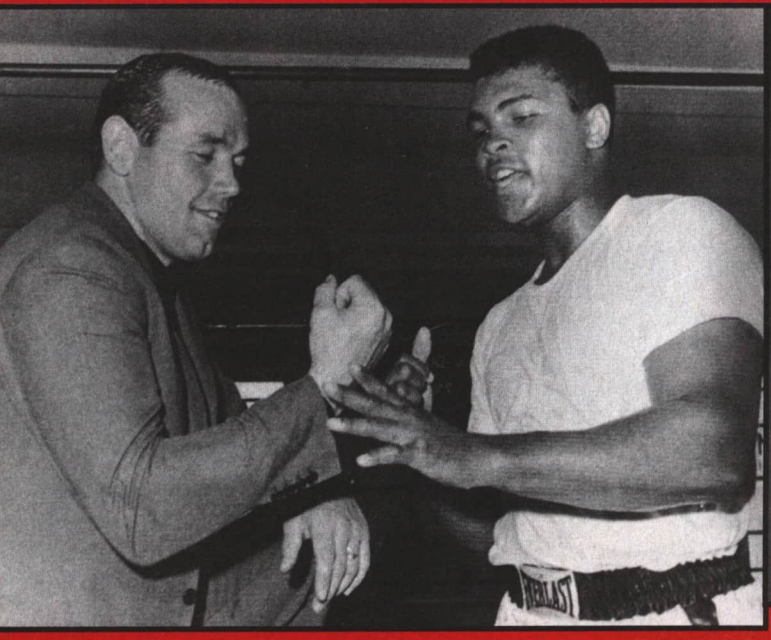
Liston grinned, pulled back his enormous right fist, and grunted: "Go get some sleep, kid, before I puts you over my knee."

Cassius Clay was boxing's hottest attraction. People chuckled when he spouted his poetry and were thrilled when his bold predictions came true.

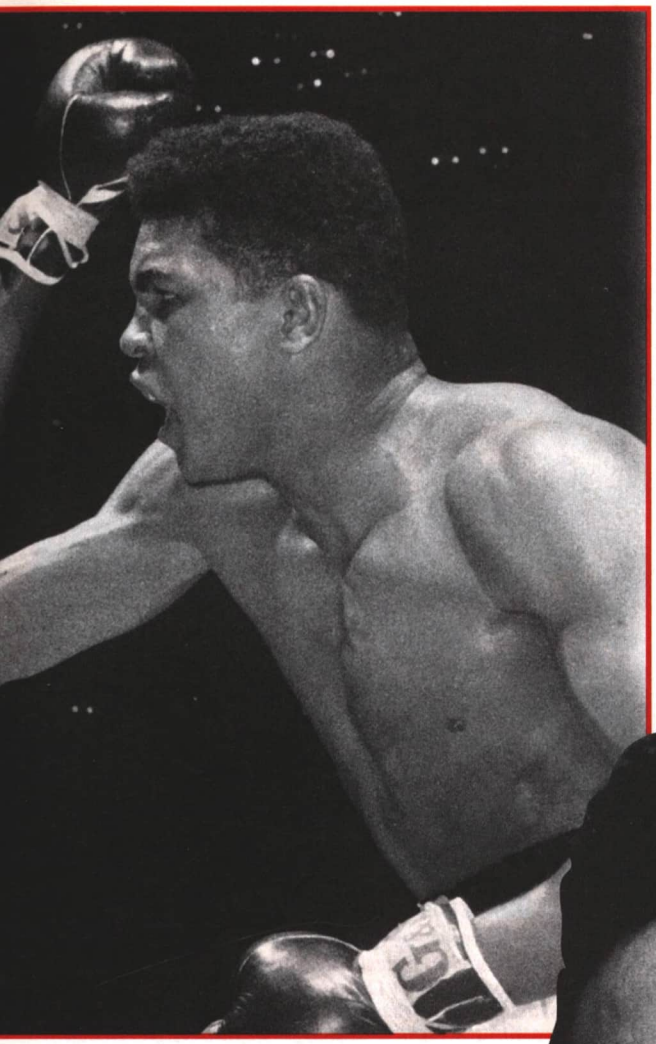
Clay wasn't so sure when durable Doug Jones would fall, however. A few days before the fight, Clay changed his knockout prediction from six rounds to four rounds. The uncertainty




*Madison Square Garden was sold out for Clay's 18th pro fight, against Doug Jones in 1963. Scoring on the rounds system, Clay won by a single point on two of the three judges' scorecards (the third was a seven-point margin). The fight was named The Ring's Fight of the Year, the first of six for Ali.*



*Ali tried to convince Ingemar Johnansson they'd make fistfuls of money if they ever fought.*



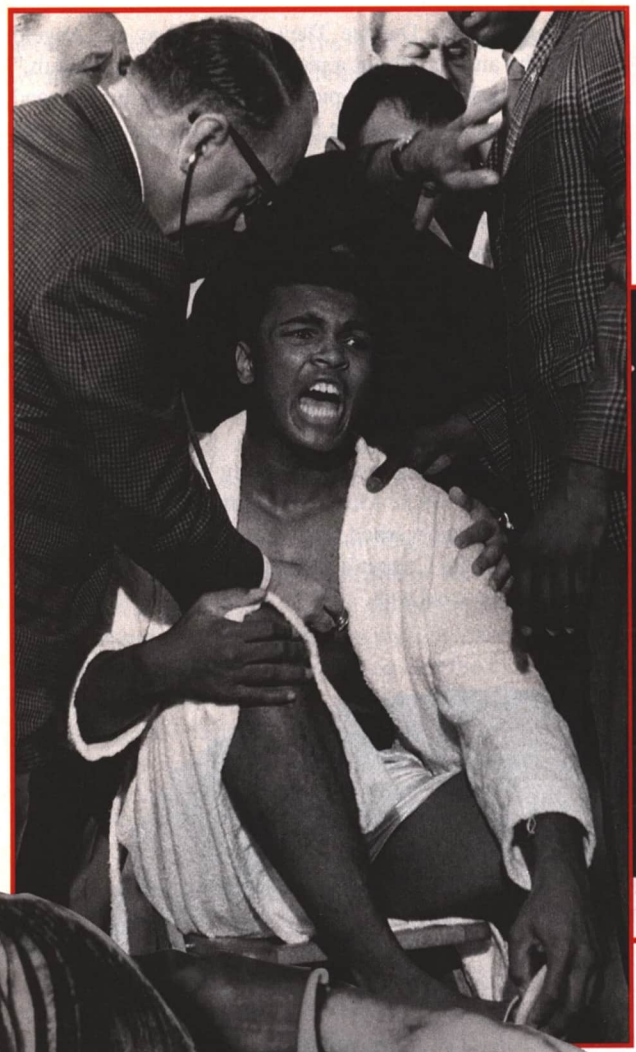
was bugging Angelo Dundee. They needed a way out. Angelo hit upon the answer. "I put a piece of tape over his mouth," Dundee recalled. "They took pictures of him with this tape and it hit all the papers. I got the blame for him not calling the round, but that was okay with me."

Jones was still on his feet at the end of 10 rounds, but Clay got the decision. He also got a round of deafening boos from the sellout crowd, which had set a Garden box office record. They had shelled out all that money to see Clay make his opponent fall. They were not prepared for a decision ending.

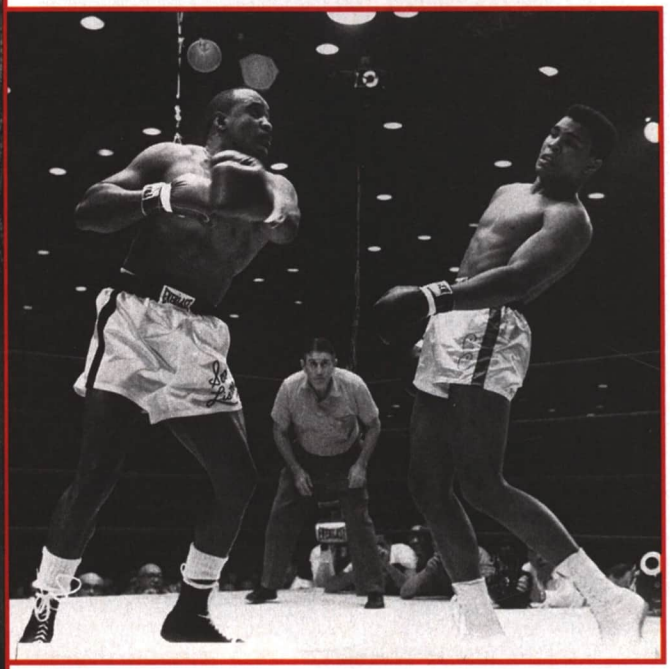
Cassius set another attendance record in June 1963 in London, England. But he had to pick himself off the floor before stopping Britain's best heavyweight, Henry Cooper, in the fifth round.

The left hook that dropped Clay early in the fight was one of the hardest blows he took in his entire career. It was the punch Dundee had warned him about. "I told him to keep moving away from Cooper's left hand," Angelo said, "but he had to learn the hard way."

*Ali with the Dave Clark Five*
*(for those of you tired of seeing the photo of Ali with The*

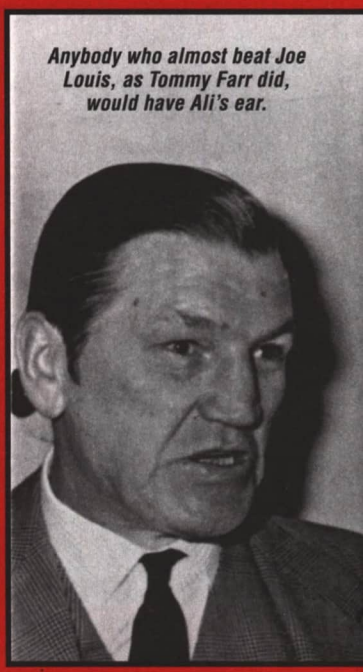


**"Take care, little boy. I need you. I'm gonna whup you like I'm your daddy."**



*Clay's heartbeat was twice its normal level during the prefight physical for his championship fight against Sonny Liston in 1964 (left), but that was due more to his hyperactivity than nervousness. When the fight began, the overwhelmingly favored Liston found his challenger a difficult target (above).*

*Anybody who almost beat Joe Louis, as Tommy Farr did, would have Ali's ear.*



MUHAMMAD *Ali*

Accompanying Cassius to London were brother Rudy and longtime friend and sparring partner Jimmy Ellis. Ellis did roadwork with his boss in London's Hyde Park, fought in a preliminary bout to the Clay-Cooper fight, and then boxed Clay more than 100 rounds on the European tour that followed.

When he returned home, Clay shifted his verbal tirades against Sonny Liston into high gear. He leaped into the ring in Las Vegas before Liston knocked out Floyd Patterson and tried to attack the champion. Sonny started for Clay with murder in his eyes, but four big cops kept them apart. Cassius grabbed the ring microphone and blasted Liston, calling him everything from a coward to an ugly old bear. It was all part of the ballyhoo building up to the fight the whole world had been waiting for. The world would not be rooting for Cassius; it would finally see Loudmouth get his lumps from the only man who could do the job.

Now it was about to happen. Everything Cassius Marcellus Clay had worked for and dreamed about since he first started to punch a bag at Joe Martin's gymnasium in Louisville could now become a reality. Cassius was ready for his supreme test. He had blossomed into full manhood: 6'3", 210 pounds, long, smooth muscles, not an ounce of surplus flesh on his magnificent body.

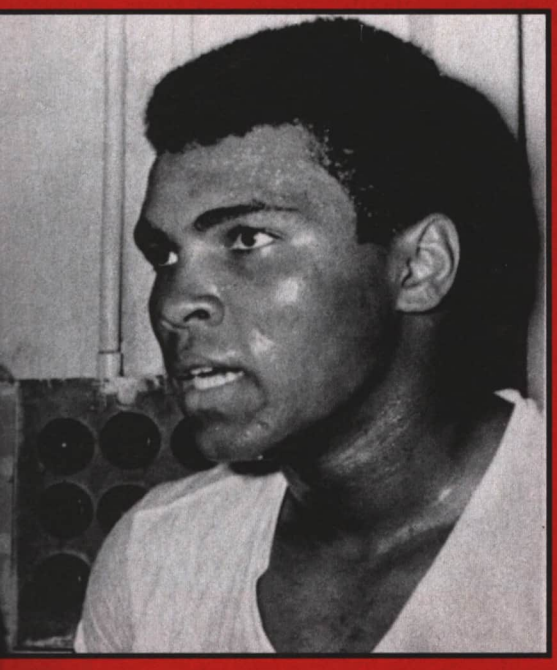
The big fight was scheduled for the night of February 25, 1964, at Convention Hall in Miami Beach, Florida. At the noon weigh-in, Clay became hysterical, and the commission doctor, Alexander Robbins, became so alarmed at Clay's zooming pulse rate that he mulled over the idea of suggesting Clay be disqualified from going into the ring.

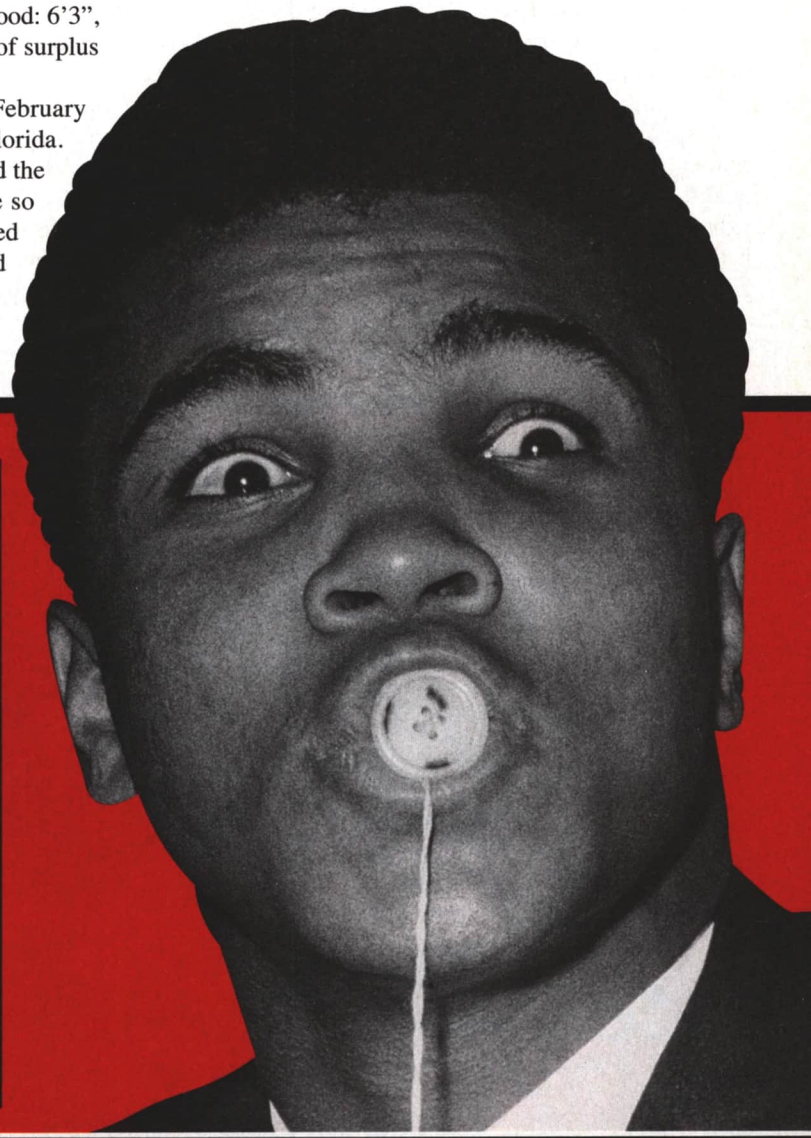
While Cassius' brother Rudy and his friend, Sugar Ray Robinson, who had flown to Miami to do what he could for Clay, tried to calm the frantic challenger, Liston sat like a huge stone statue watching what he would later call "the best show I seen since the circus."

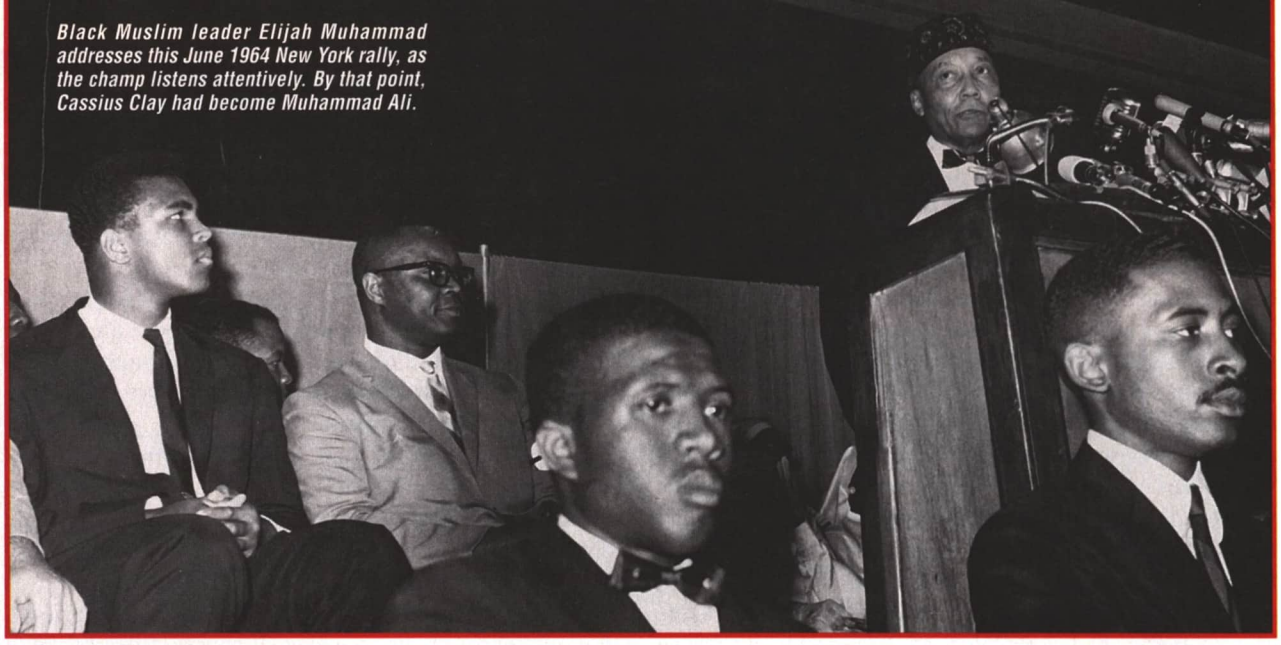
The army of reporters that had invaded Miami from all over the world looked anxiously toward the door of Clay's dressing room when the big clock on the wall pointed to 10:00 p.m. The moment had arrived.

What they saw bounce through that dressing room door astonished them. Clay appeared calm and the expression on his face was devoid of fear. One reporter quipped to the reporter next to him, "They must have doped him up to get him out of the dressing room."

Clay did not look like the 7-1 underdog the bettors had made him. He ducked under Liston's long jabs and tied him up easily when Sonny tried to get in close. In the second round, Cassius' left began to zero in on the champion's face, tearing the flesh on his nose and around his eyes. Sonny was having trouble seeing the fleet Clay. But in the fourth round, Clay started to rub his own eyes. It appeared that he could not see either. When Cassius slumped into his stool at the end







*Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad addresses this June 1964 New York rally, as the champ listens attentively. By that point, Cassius Clay had become Muhammad Ali.*

of the round, he told Dundee that he would have to quit. "I can't see," the challenger moaned.

Dundee remained calm. He washed out Clay's eyes, and when the bell rang to begin round five, Angelo yanked Cassius off the stool, smacked him on the behind, and shoved him out of the corner.

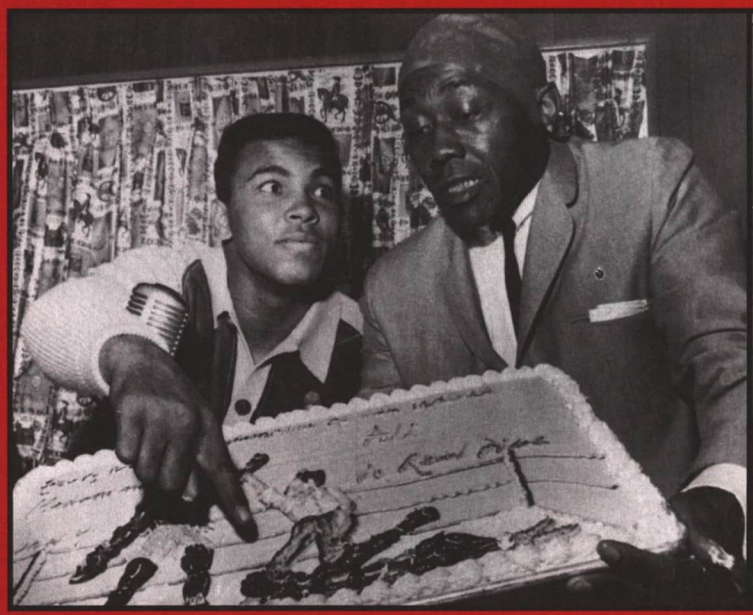
Clay ran until the burning in his eyes went away. Referee Barney Felix later revealed how close he had come to disqualifying Cassius. "When the bell rang for the fifth, Clay wouldn't come out. I hollered at him, 'Dammit, Clay, get out here!'" Felix added, "If he hadn't moved in that split second, he was all finished."

Less than 10 minutes later, Liston was all finished while Clay was still full of fight. Complaining that he had injured his shoulder while throwing a punch, the champion refused to leave his corner for the seventh round.

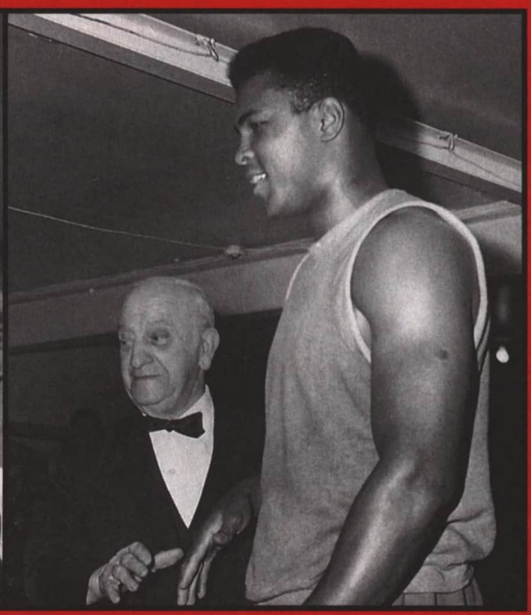
Amid the howls of protest that rose from the crowd, Clay leaped around the ring like a maniac. Dundee picked him up a few times, then Angelo started to jump around too. It seemed both of them were trying to make sure it wasn't just a dream.

The next day, the man who had been born Cassius Marcellus Clay killed Cassius Marcellus Clay. He confirmed to the world what until then had been a rumor: He was a Black Muslim and his real name was Muhammad Ali. "Don't nobody call me by my slave name no more," Ali demanded.

White people resented what he did, but black people, in general, were awed by his courage. He was a maverick, all right.



*Ali confers with his "strategy advisor," old-time comedian Stepin Fechit before the Liston rematch.*



*Ring Editor Nat Fleischer insisted on using the name "Cassius Clay."*

*Promoting the rematch with Liston in 1965, Ali hits the streets of Boston, rope and collar in hand, searching for the man he dubbed "The Bear."*

**"Don't nobody call me by my slave name no more."**

Ali went off to tour Africa, to be near "my people." He dressed in tribal clothes and he wore the dome hat Muslims wear. He was happily surprised when he discovered that his fame had spread to the homeland of his ancestors. He said that he felt like he belonged in Africa. "This is my real home," he said.

White men listened to what Ali said, but they didn't understand. They couldn't accuse him this time of trying to attract attention with the ultimate objective of making money. Being a Muslim would hurt his career. Could he really be serious about this Muslim thing? Ali said he would gladly forsake fame and fortune for the things he believed. He was deadly serious.

Liston had not been a popular champion, and he had been roasted for quitting in his corner while his title passed to Ali, but compared to Muhammad, Sonny was a hero. When Liston got his return bout, in Lewiston, Maine, on May 25, 1965, he was cheered as he stepped into the ring. Ali was hissed and booed. But Clay's first-round knockout of Sonny rocked the boxing world. People yelled "fix" and legislators were prodded to introduce bills that would outlaw boxing.

Most ringsiders insisted that they never saw the punch that was supposed to have flattened Sonny Boy. But a few claimed they had seen it: a flashing right flush on Liston's jaw. The films did not end the dispute because the camera angle hid the in-close action at the time of the knockout.

Boxing wasn't banned and it seemed that Ali couldn't have cared less if it were. He was "The Greatest" and now everybody believed him. But he wasn't shooting off his mouth anymore, and he stopped reciting his poetry. He admitted that "all that stuff was just to attract attention and to sell tickets." Now that he was the champion, there was "no more need for all that stuff." Besides, Ali was in love. She was a beautiful girl, Sonji Roi, and after a whirlwind courtship, they were married in 1964.

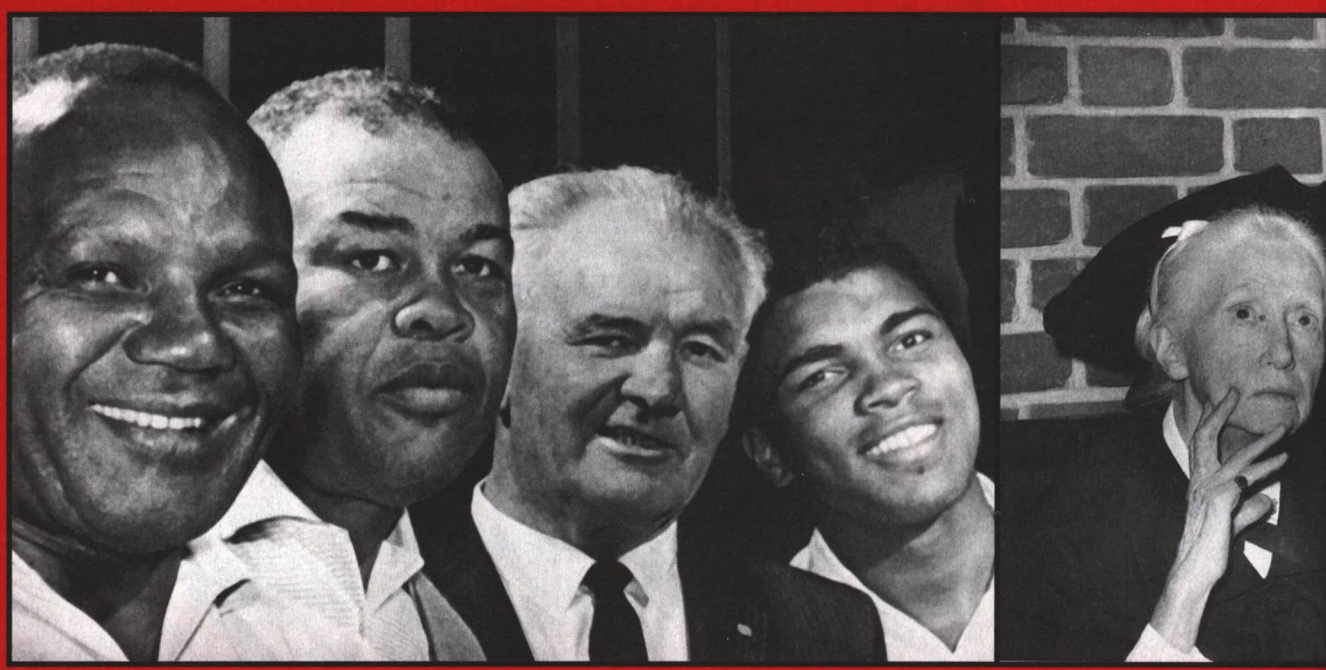
"I don't think Muhammad could ever love another woman like he loves Sonji," said Herbert Muhammad, son of the Muslim high prophet, Elijah Muhammad. "I've never seen a man and a woman with a love like theirs."

But when Sonji refused to accept the Muslim religion, Ali divorced her. It was a costly separation: $15,000 a year would go to Sonji for 10 years, then there were lawyers' fees and court costs amounting to $22,500. Ali was to marry again, but wife number two would be a devout Muslim.

Ali appeared to have scorn for blacks who refused to accept the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. He carried his scorn into the ring against Floyd Patterson and Ernie Terrell. He called Patterson "The Rabbit," and he angrily referred to Terrell as an "Uncle Tom."

In his second title defense, Ali stopped Patterson in the 12th round, but he couldn't knock out Floyd, who was pitifully bent over by a bad back. The cry went up, "The champ can't punch!"

During the weigh-in for his fight with Terrell, Ernie refused to refer to the champion as Muhammad Ali. He kept calling him Cassius Clay. Ali fumed, "I'm gonna whup you good," he threatened Ernie. And he kept his word. He was accused of



*Ali relaxes with a newspaper and his phonograph the night before his defense against Ernie Terrell at the Houston Astrodome in 1967.*

intentionally carrying Terrell the full 15 rounds so that he could chop him up. Ali didn't deny it.

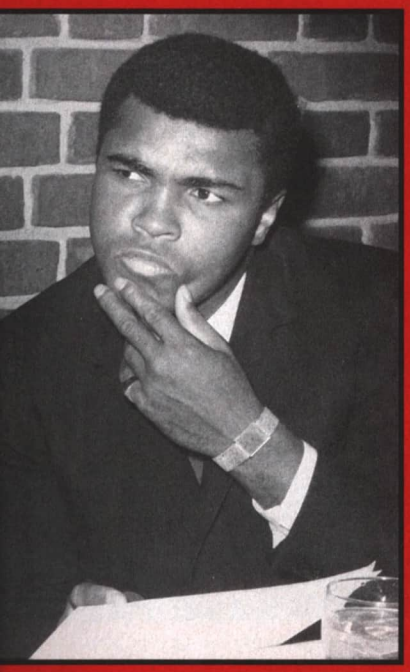
His unpopularity forced Ali out of the country to find work. He decisioned George Chuvalo in Toronto, KO'd Henry Cooper (for the second time) and Brian London in England, and knocked out Karl Mildenberger in Germany. He was caught in the same trap that had plagued the first black man ever to hold the heavyweight championship, Jack Johnson. Ali seemed unacceptable at home.

But he bucked public opinion in November 1966 by defending his title in Houston, Texas, against Cleveland Williams. Ali couldn't call Williams an Uncle Tom or a rabbit: Williams was black and he was proud of it, just like Ali. Cleveland was a murderous hitter, but a bullet in the belly the year before had reduced him to a shell of his former self and Ali hardly broke a sweat knocking him out in three rounds.

"You should have heard the boos when he walked down the aisle," recalled Jimmy Ellis. "They came to see the champ get licked, and he fooled them."

"I get booed and it makes me stronger," Ali commented. "If everybody said, 'Oh, champ, you is beautiful,' I'd just lay back. But if a guy says, 'I hope you get whipped,' I just got to beat him and everybody else."

Early in 1967, Ali received his army induction notice. He refused to take the oath on the grounds that he was a minister in the Black Muslim sect. He proclaimed that he would go to jail and give up everything rather than be forced into doing things he believed were wrong. The world seemed to be clos-



*Far Left: Jersey Joe Walcott, Joe Louis, and Jim Braddock drop in on camp before the second Liston fight.*

*Left: Ali may have been out of his class when he met poet Mary Anne Moore.*

ing in on Muhammad Ali, but there might still be time for one more fight, one more payday.

There was time for a one-sided, seventh-round KO victory over Zora Folley at Madison Square Garden on March 22, 1967. Perhaps there was even time for another payday. Ali hastily signed for another bout with Floyd Patterson, in Las Vegas. It was then that the cold reality of being banned hit Ali: The governor of Nevada, Paul Laxalt, forbade the promoters to go through with the fight.

Ali filled with resentment. "What can you give me, America?" he asked. "You want me to do what the white man says and go fight a war against people I don't know nothing about. To go get some freedom for other people when my own people don't have freedom at home?

"You want me to be scared of the white man and to go and get two arms shot off and then give me 10 medals and then pat me on the head and say, 'Good boy, you fought for your country.'"

Each time Ali spoke he felt he was delivering his message to the black people of the world. "All our lives we learn that black is evil, it's dirty. They call black cake 'devil's food cake.' But we learn in our Muslim temples that black dirt is the richest dirt and that the blackest coffee is the strongest coffee. So the religion of Muslims fits black people like a glove. I don't have to be what the white man wants me to be. I'm free to be who I want to be, and I want to be with my own kind."

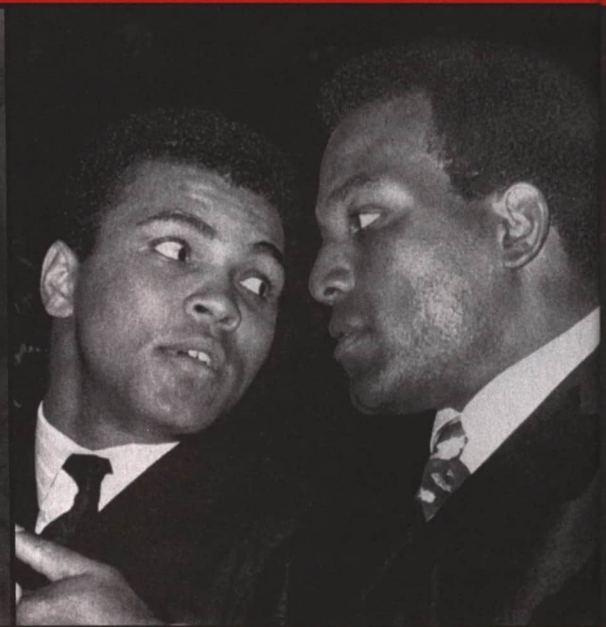
Immediately after he refused induction, Ali was stripped of his title in several states, while others waited for the court's official ruling. He continued his legal battle to stay out of jail at enormous expense. He spent his time speaking at Muslim temples and he became the hottest attraction on the college circuit. Young America, white and black, admired him, and they cheered when he did his thing.

**"All our lives we learn that black is evil, it's dirty. They call black cake 'devil's food cake.' But we learn in our Muslim temples that black dirt is the richest dirt and that the blackest coffee is the strongest coffee."**

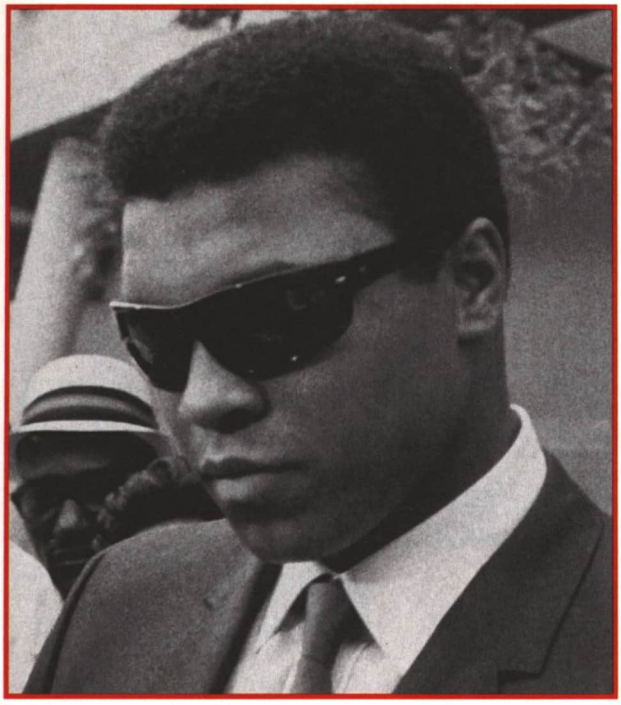
Although he seemed to lose interest in boxing, the subject never failed to come before he could end a lecture or an appearance on television. He had a stock answer:

"Ali will return. My ghost will haunt boxing arenas. People will watch fights and say, 'Ali could whip both those guys with one hand.' When I'm gone, they'll carry boxing to the graveyard. It's gonna be back to the days when a fighter will come to town, smell flowers, visit a hospital, blow a horn and tell everybody he's in real good shape. Old hat! Bury it!"

*Ali admires the weaponry of former champ Jack Dempsey in '65.*



*Ali was on hand to honor football great Jim Brown on "Jim Brown Farewell Day" in 1967.*



*In May 1967, in Houston, a dejected Ali leaves the Federal Courthouse, where his last appeal to stay out of the Army is denied.*

There was one fight, however, for which Ali did not need a license: a computer bout. It was billed as the "Super Fight," and on the night of January 20, 1970, hundreds of thousands of boxing fans, along with an equal number of the just plain curious, flocked to more than 600 theaters around the world to see Muhammad Ali actually mix it up with the only other undefeated heavyweight champion, Rocky Marciano, and then being let in on the most closely guarded secret since D-Day—the computer's answer to this question: Who would have won had Marciano and Ali fought while in their respective primes?

Marciano was killed in a plane crash four months before the official showing and he never knew whether he had won or lost. But Ali watched the bout in a Philadelphia theater along with a tense, standing-room-only crowd.

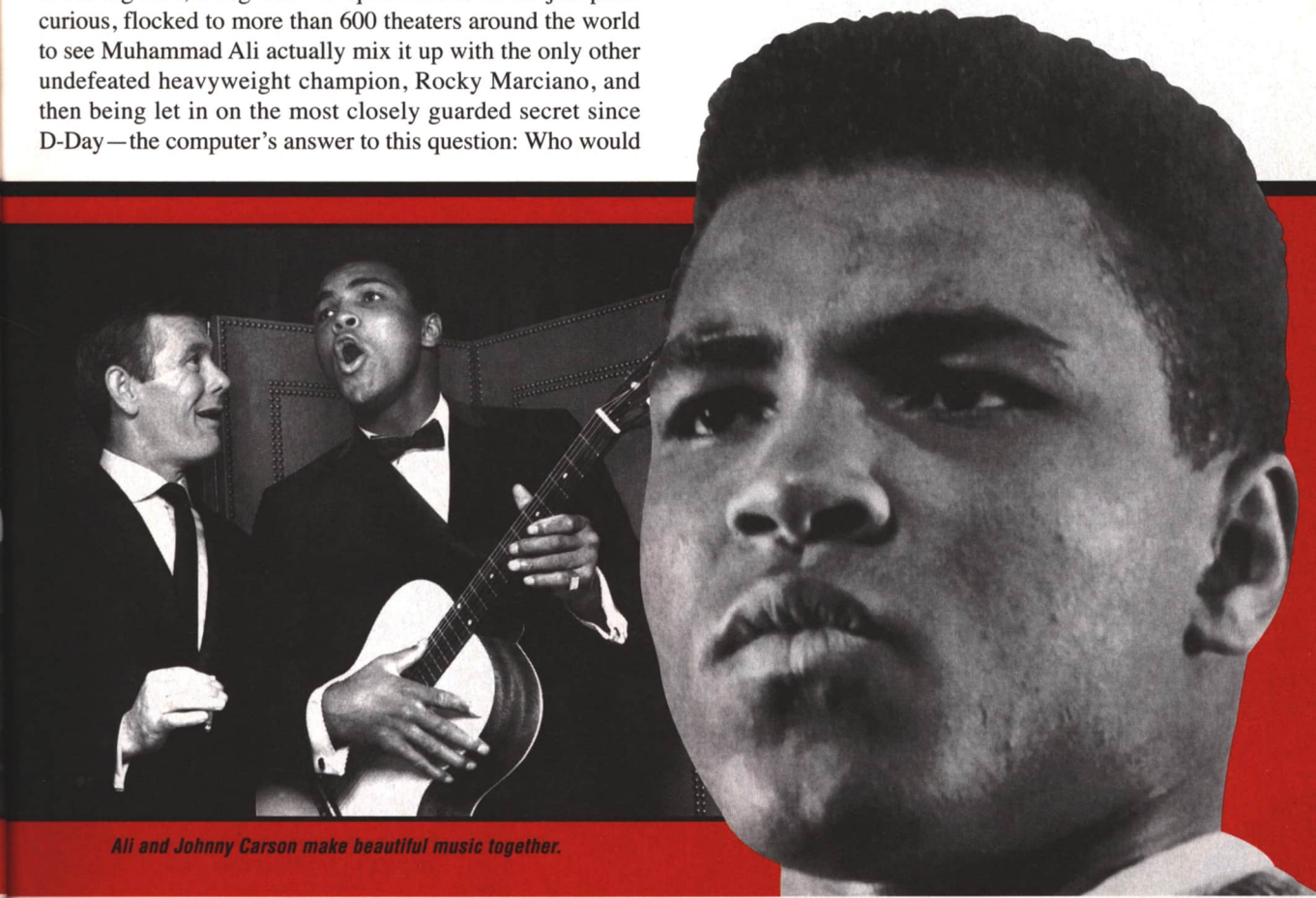
Muhammad didn't sit still for a moment as he ducked, rolled, and even leaped to his feet as blows were exchanged on the screen. He looked like a man confident of victory, until the sudden dramatic ending.

The man who had never lost a real fight in his life and who had all but convinced the world that he was indeed The Greatest, saw himself take one of Marciano's looping rights to the jaw in the 13th round, drop to the floor on his hands and knees, and be counted out.

Obviously upset, Ali stormed out of the theater and stepped into his waiting Cadillac. Later that night, Muhammad issued his one-sentence comment: "I think it's time for me to quit when I get whupped by a 46-year-old man and a computer that was made in Alabama."

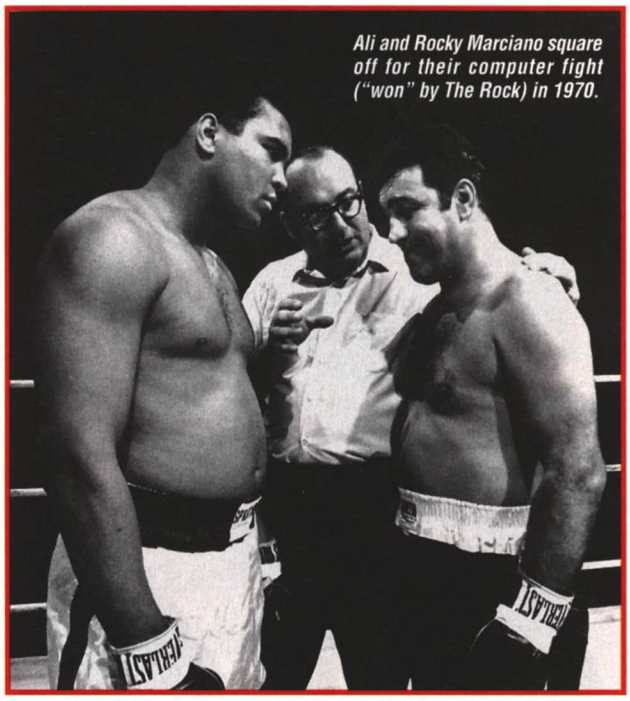
From April 28, 1967, the day he refused to step forward at a military swearing-in ceremony, until the fall of 1970, Ali was refused a license to box anywhere in America. What's more, he was also refused a passport to leave the country.

He made his living appearing on television talk shows and lecturing at universities throughout the country. The students loved Ali—he spoke their language. They understood.



*Ali and Johnny Carson make beautiful music together.*

**"I think it's time for me to quit when I get whupped by a 46-year-old man and a computer that was made in Alabama."**

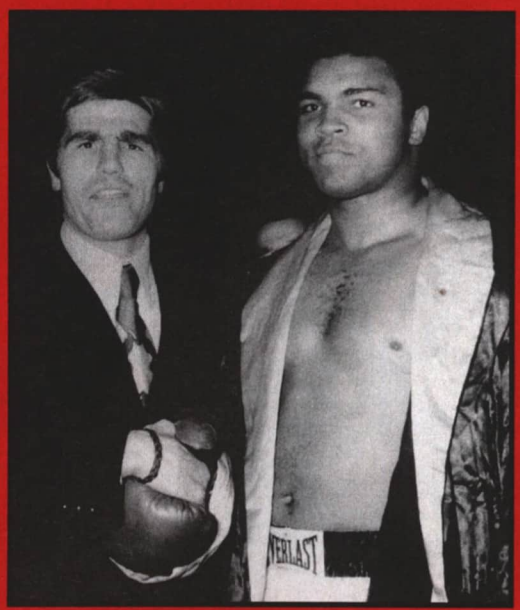

Ali and Rocky Marciano square off for their computer fight ("won" by The Rock) in 1970.

Meanwhile, Ali's battery of lawyers was busy fighting his case with Uncle Sam and also with those state athletic commissions that had banned him. The fight bore fruit in August 1970, when Georgia Senator Leroy Johnson gave Ali the green light to fight in his state. At almost the same time, Federal Judge Walter R. Mansfield ruled that Ali's suspension by the New York Athletic Commission was "arbitrary and unreasonable." That decision started the walls that had been thrown up against Ali crumbling. New York was forced to grant him a license.

Muhammad's first fight in three years took place in Atlanta on October 26, 1970. His opponent: Jerry Quarry. It was an electrifying night as famous black men and women from every walk of life turned out to cheer for the man who had become the champion of the downtrodden everywhere and the symbol of the black struggle for equality.

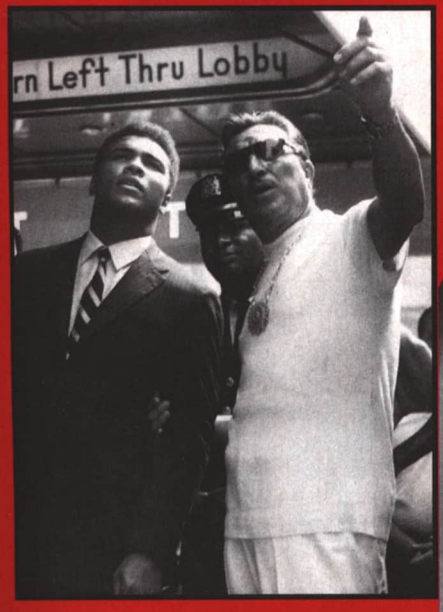
His performance inside the ring was as dazzling as the spectacle outside. Not only did he move and sting like the old Ali, at 213½ pounds he seemed to hit harder than ever before. In the third round, a snapping right slashed open a deep cut in Quarry's left brow that led to the fight being stopped.

Following his destruction of Quarry, no one doubted that Ali had retained most of his skills. Now the sporting world

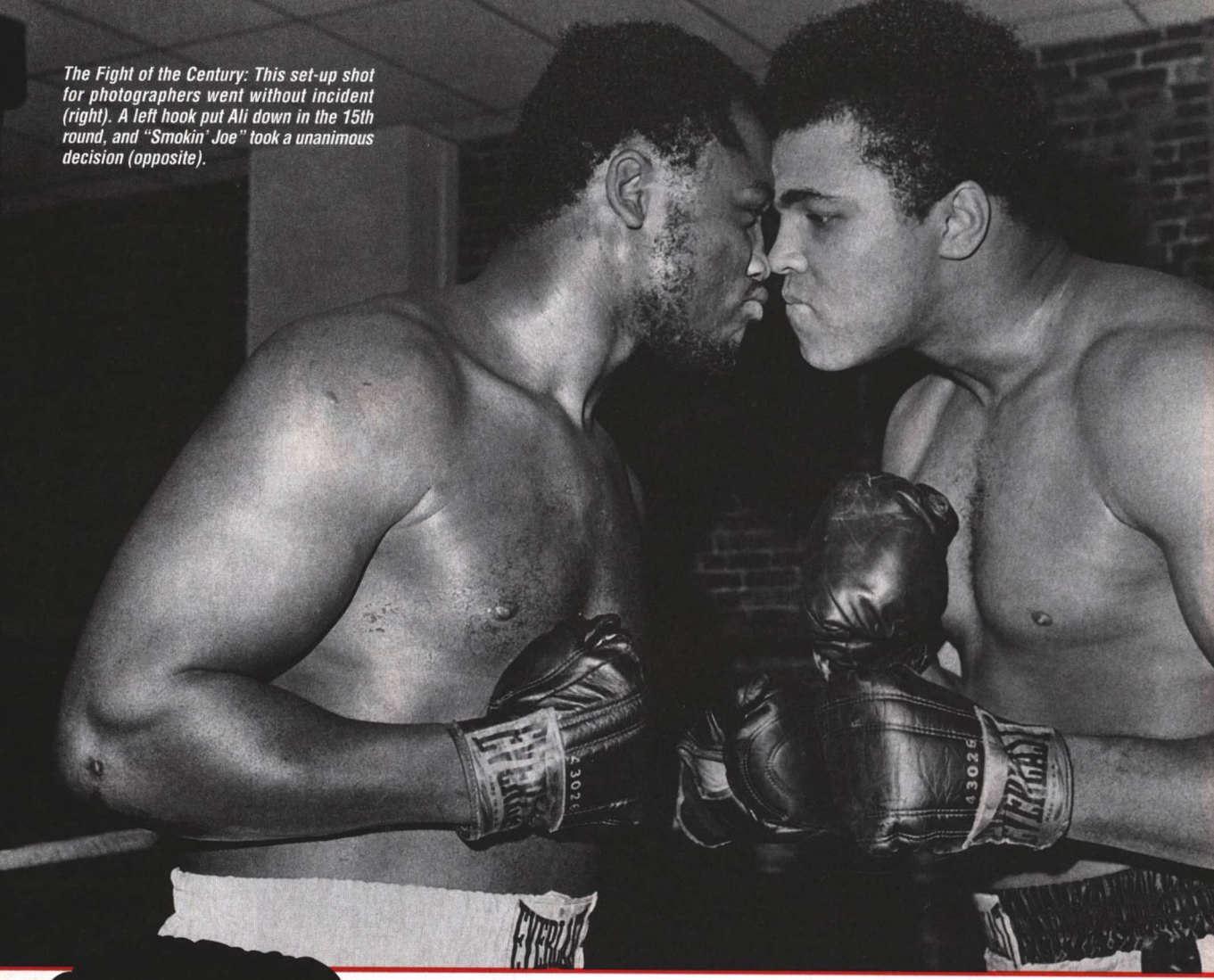

Nino Benvenuti gets together with Ali prior to an exhibition bout in 1971.

*After a 3½-year exile, Ali returns to boxing with a third-round TKO of Jerry Quarry at City Auditorium in Atlanta. The fight was stopped due to Quarry's cuts.*

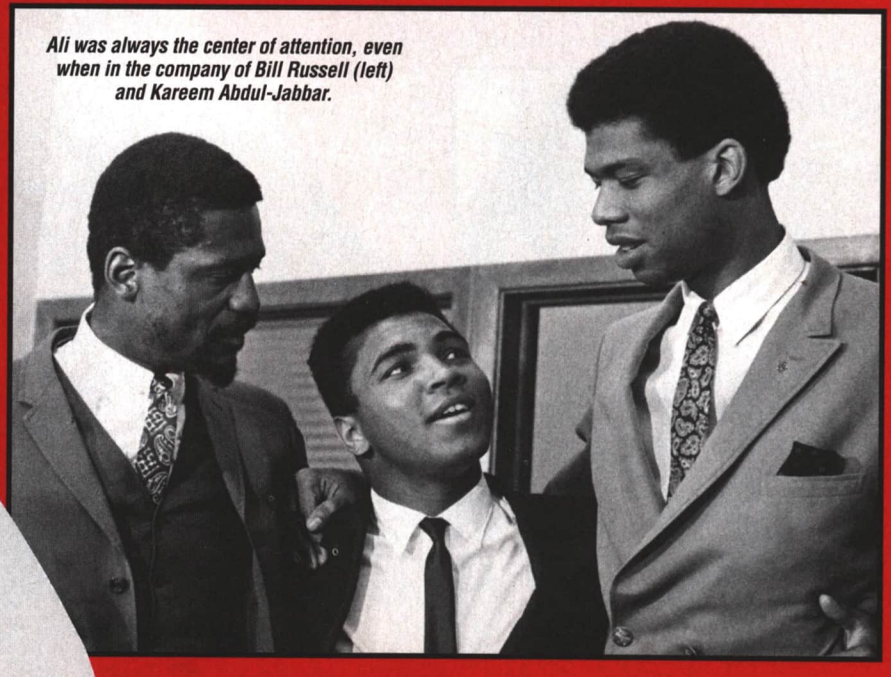
*Congressman Adam Clayton Powell gives "The Greatest" a personal tour of the Big Apple in 1968.*



*The Fight of the Century: This set-up shot for photographers went without incident (right). A left hook put Ali down in the 15th round, and "Smokin' Joe" took a unanimous decision (opposite).*



*Ali was always the center of attention, even when in the company of Bill Russell (left) and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.*



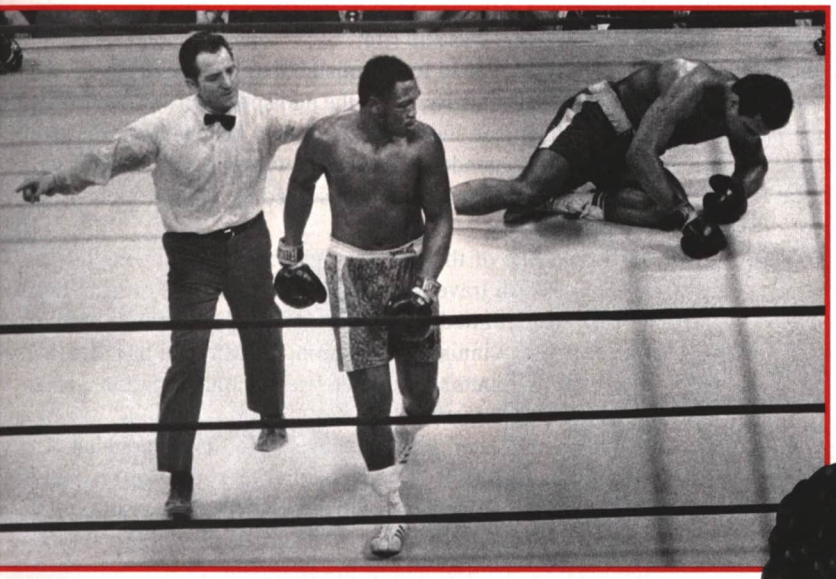
began to clamor for Ali to fight current champion Smokin' Joe Frazier. After three years of inactivity, though, the former champion needed to sharpen his skills further before he faced the dangerous Philadelphian with a left hook that could render any opponent unconscious.

Dundee, aware of the danger Frazier represented, knew his fighter needed an opponent who could help rid him of any remaining ring rust. And they found that man in Argentine Oscar Bonavena. Bonavena was earning a reputation as the new George Chuvalo—not much style, but a man almost impossible to bring down. He assured Ali of a long battle, the first time in a very long while Ali might go 15 rounds. Oscar promised the necessary tough workout Muhammad needed before facing Frazier.

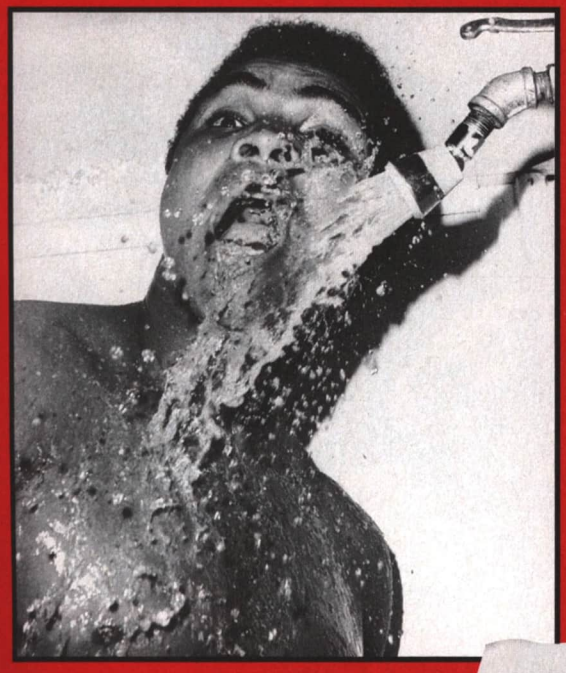
The fight was tougher than Ali expected. On December 7, 1970, less than two months after beating Quarry, Muhammad met Oscar, and the Argentine was everything promised. In fact, going into the 15th round, spectators were wondering which of the two men was ahead.

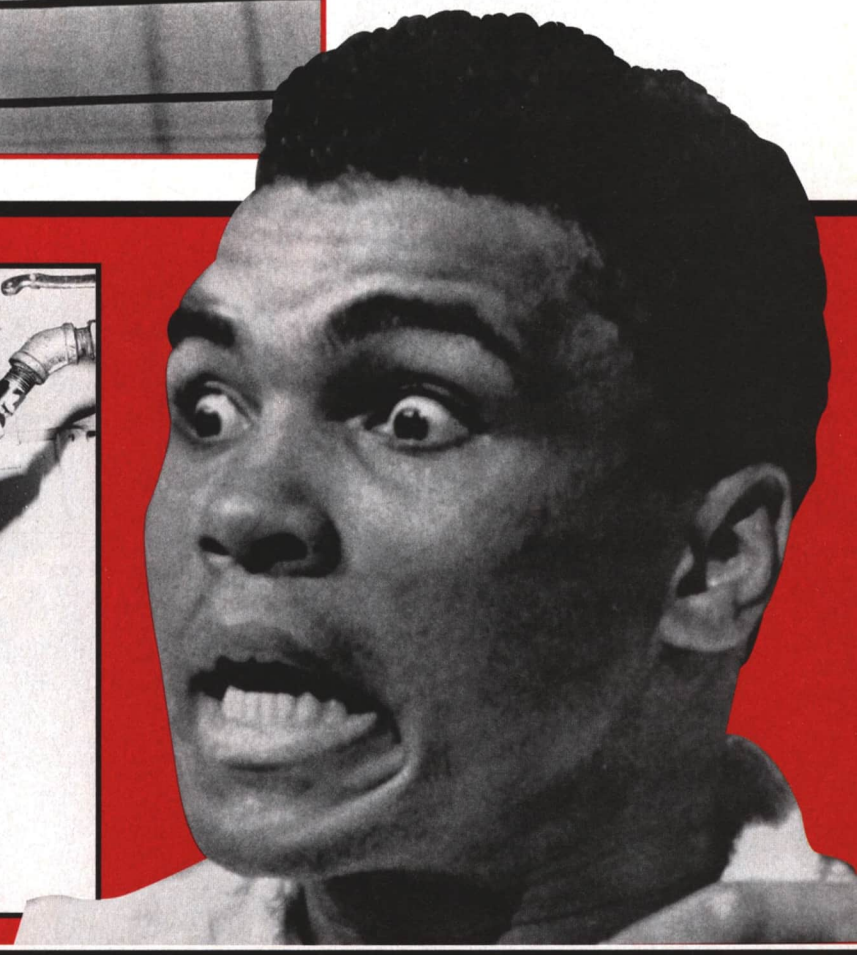
Then, in the last stanza of a fight Ali had to win to get a shot at the championship stolen from him, the man who couldn't be knocked down went to the canvas three times. The mandatory three knockdown rule ended the fight and Ali's legend had gained another chapter.

So the stage was set for "The Fight of the Century." Two legitimate champions met in Madison Square Garden on March 8, 1971. Few events in history have engendered as much interest and publicity. It promised to be a classic contest between the slugger and the boxer. The bout lived up to its promise. In fact, the bout has few equals in the annals of boxing.



Both men were undefeated going into this fight. Up until the 14th round, either man might have been given the decision, and no one could have honestly disagreed. However, in the 15th round, a left hook by Frazier landed on Ali's jaw. Muhammad fell to the canvas and lost the round and perhaps the fight. The decision was awarded to Frazier. For the first time in his career, Joe Frazier became the undisputed heavyweight champion of the





world. Momentarily, it looked as if the legend of Muhammad Ali had sputtered to a halt.

Ali, now the former heavyweight champion, taught the world never to underestimate a legend. The loser found himself very much in demand, with his popularity growing. Eagerly, the Houston Astrodome bid for his services against his former sparring partner Jimmy Ellis.

Muhammad got back in the winning track by defeating Ellis in the 12th round. Ali may have lost the title, but proved he had not been finished by the Frazier bout. He kept himself limber, waiting for Frazier to consent to a rematch.

Ali's legend almost crumbled in his next bout. Few heavyweight contests have been as unbelievably dull as Muhammad's fight against Buster Mathis. Both men came in embarrassingly overweight, Ali's 227 career record pounds dwarfed only by Buster's 256 pounds. For 10 wretched rounds, the portly gentlemen stumbled around the ring, successful only in avoiding hurting each other. Those who wished to sound the death knell to Muhammad Ali, contender, gleefully pointed to his pathetic performance during this fight. While it's true Mathis crumpled to the canvas four times in the last two rounds, exhaustion, rather than Ali, was the cause.

After this disgrace, experts were more than happy to leap to the conclusion that Ali had been destroyed by the grueling battle with Frazier. Despite Muhammad's poor showing and Frazier's unwillingness to fight anyone of consequence, people looked forward to a rematch between the two. Ali and Frazier had created a magic that would forever link their two names with excitement. People waited for some concrete evidence on how the Fight of the Century had affected the two men. Fantastic sums were being bandied about for the rematch.

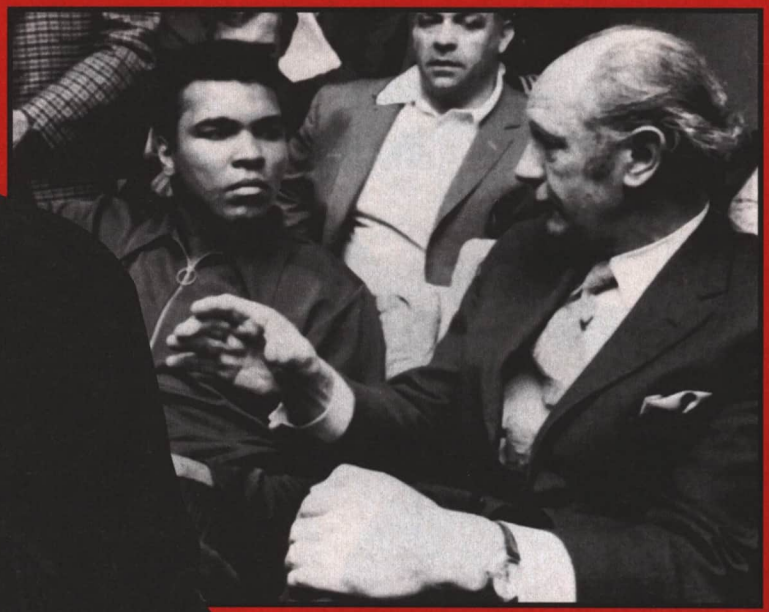
While negotiations for "Superfight II" sputtered along, Ali decided to earn some extra money and wipe out the wretched image of his corpulent form stumbling against Mathis. A little over a month after the debacle, Ali met and knocked out Juergen Blin. Juergen managed to last seven rounds against Muhammad. Ali claimed to be unaffected by the Frazier fight, but speculation was still rife.

The world waited for a rematch, but neither fighter would come to terms. Frazier, being the undisputed champion, felt his share of the purse should be larger than the challenger's. Ali's negotiators contended Muhammad was an equal, if not bigger draw than the champion and deserved an equal percentage of the profits.

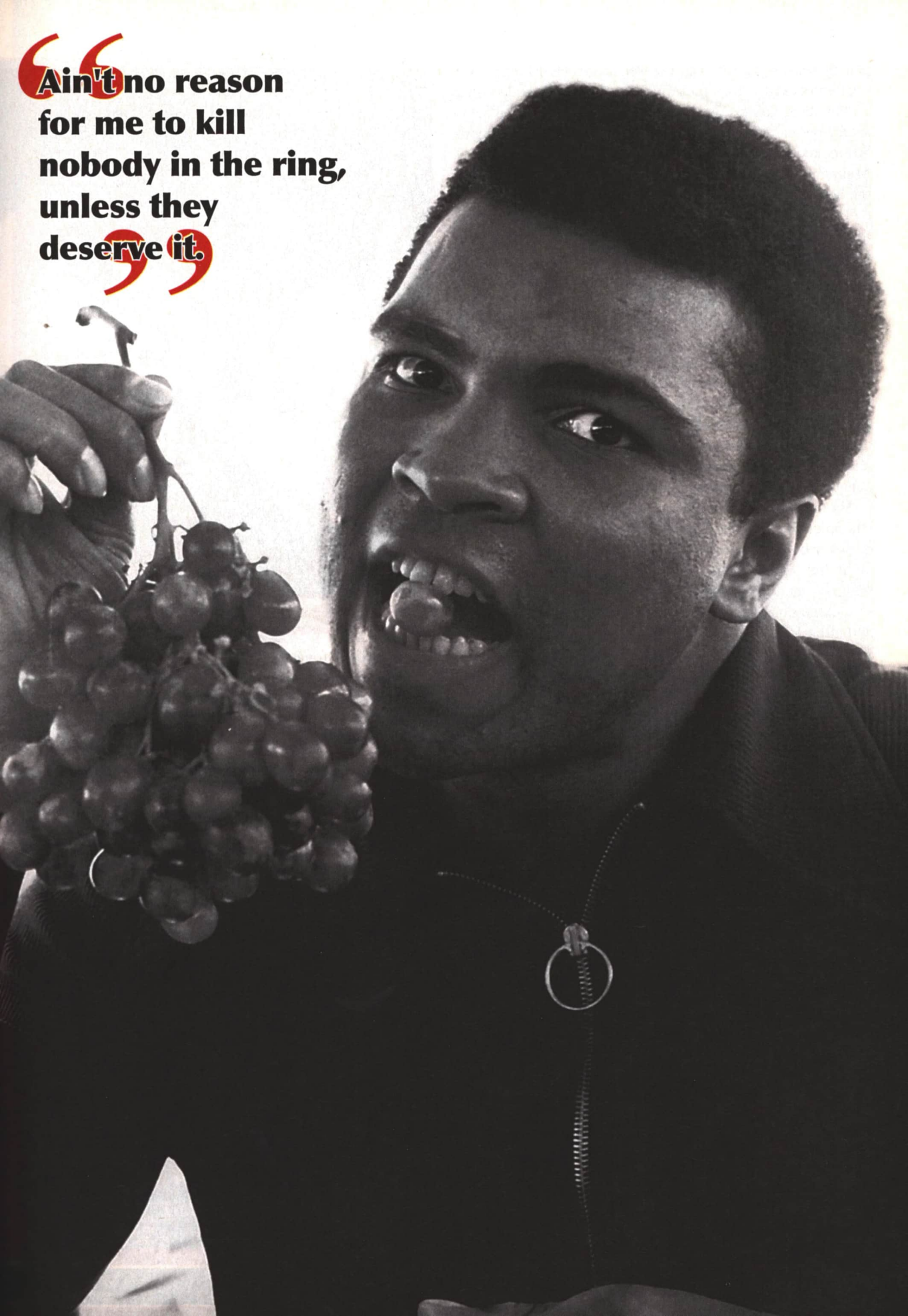
So the fate of the heavyweight division remained unresolved, and Ali traveled to Tokyo in April 1972 to meet Mac Foster. Muhammad was forced to go the distance against Foster before winning the decision. Muhammad then began a whirlwind of bouts to prove he was the only legitimate challenger to Frazier's crown.

One month later, Ali fought everyone's favorite tough victim, George Chuvalo, for the second time. Not surprisingly, Chuvalo lost convincingly without being knocked out.

Less than two months later, Muhammad fought Jerry Quarry, the man he beat on cuts in the first fight of his comeback.



*Irish Republic Prime Minister Jack Lynch discusses his country's plight prior to Ali's fight with "Blue" Lewis.*


"Ain't no reason
for me to kill
nobody in the ring,
unless they
deserve it."

Quarry was still regarded as a powerful puncher, and a victory over him would prove Muhammad Ali's greatness still existed.

For seven rounds, Ali humiliated his opponent. An act of mercy by the referee ended the fight by TKO in the seventh. Ali looked like the dancing master of old, totally in control. Muhammad Ali was now the only legitimate contender for the heavyweight title.

However, up to this point, Frazier had been content to fight the once and future nobodies, Ron Stander and Terry Daniels. Once again, the shadow of Muhammad Ali tarnished Joe's glory. Yet Frazier and Ali could come no closer to an agreement.

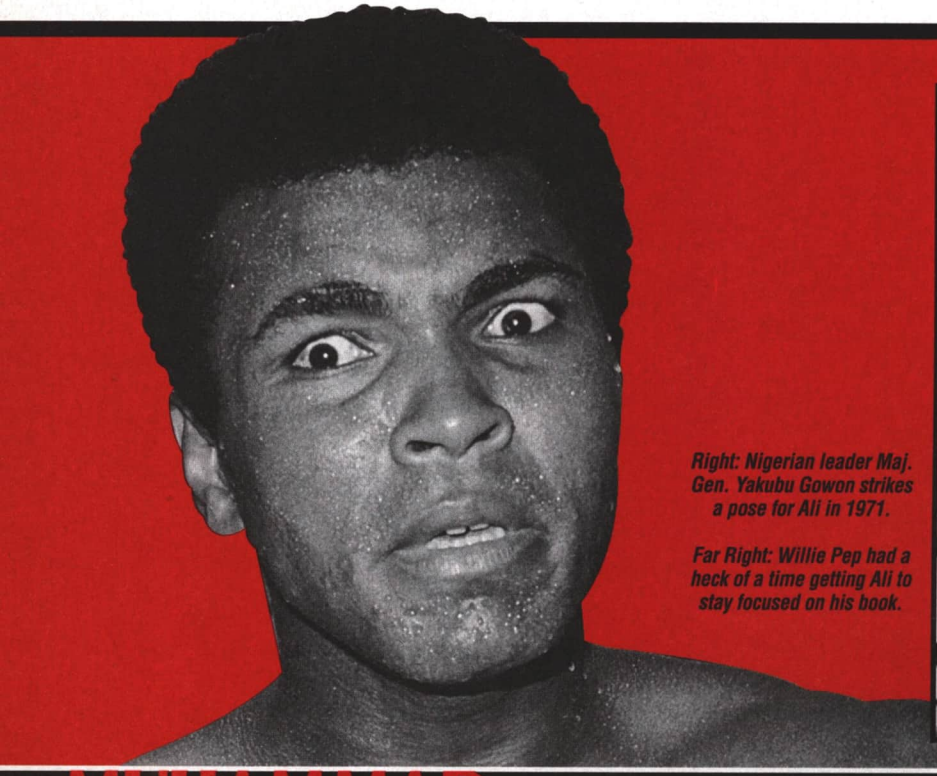
So Ali hopped on a plane to Dublin, Ireland, and fought Al "Blue" Lewis. Lewis lasted 11 rounds, allowing the fans who filled the stadium to see a living legend box in person. After a summer vacation, Ali fought Floyd Patterson in September 1972. Before his suspension, Ali had been especially cruel to Patterson in 12 sadistic frames. But now, Ali had nothing to prove any longer, and both he and Floyd had matured. Without rancor, two professionals fought each other for seven rounds, after which Ali was declared the winner. Muhammad revealed a maturity that had nothing to do with boxing.

From Patterson, Ali went on to meet light heavyweight champion Bob Foster. Foster did nothing to hurt his record of never being able to beat a heavyweight, losing to Ali in eight. Yet, Foster earned a place in the Ali legend by being the first man to ever cut Muhammad.

George Foreman threw a wrench into Superfight II when he battered Joe Frazier senseless in two rounds in January 1973. As Frazier dropped six times to the canvas, the chance of a multimillion-dollar fight with Ali went down with him. Or so everyone thought.

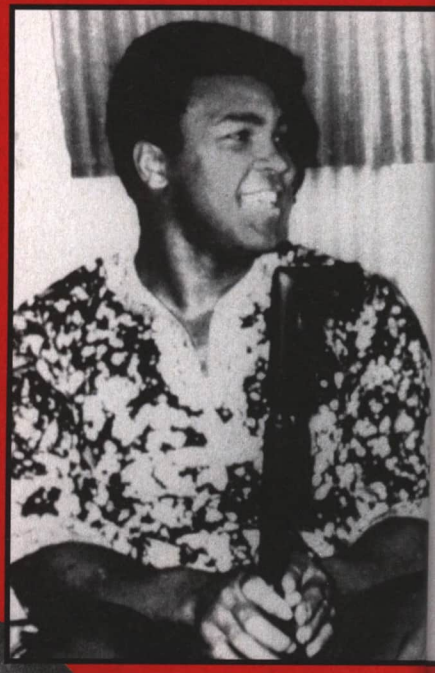
Muhammad thought he'd earn another purse while the boxing world regrouped, but the early part of 1973 proved to be a bad time for him. Frazier's tactical error of meeting George Foreman was almost equaled by Ali's error of signing for a meaningless match against Ken Norton. At some time during the fight, little-known Norton broke the most famous boxing jaw in history.

*Ali gets a soft drink in the dressing room following his seventh-round TKO of Jerry Quarry in Las Vegas in 1972.*

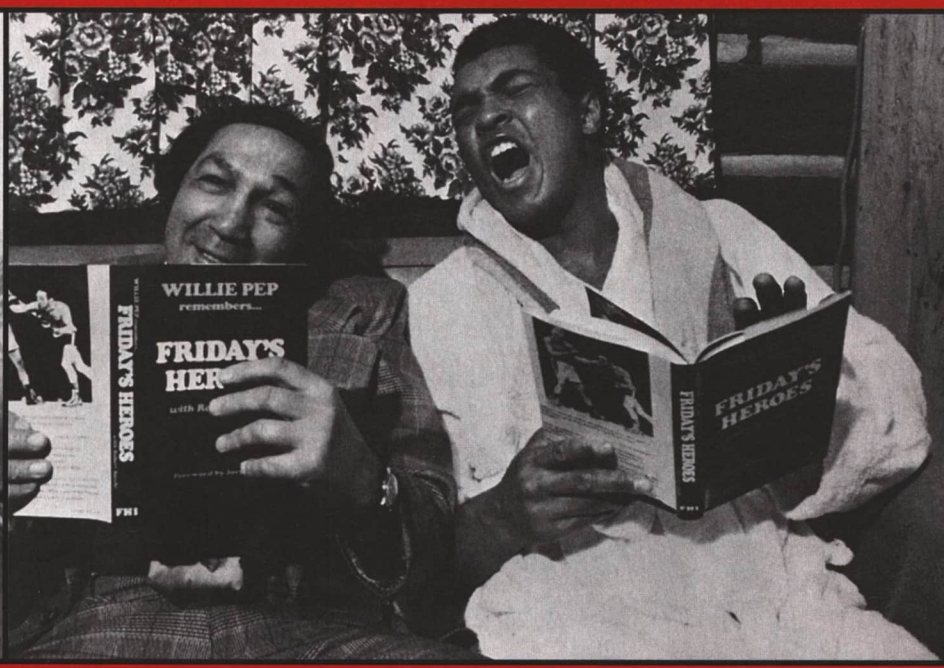


*Right: Nigerian leader Maj. Gen. Yakubu Gowon strikes a pose for Ali in 1971.*

*Far Right: Willie Pep had a heck of a time getting Ali to stay focused on his book.*



*Bundini Brown and Angelo Dundee tend to Ali at the press conference following his eight-round knockout of light heavyweight champion Bob Foster (far left) in 1972.*



Despite the break, Ali managed to finish the fight, but he lost a split decision. Ken Norton earned a bit of immortality and the future of Muhammad Ali hung in doubt.

Six months later, in the best shape of his career, Ali fought his first real do-or-die fight. The promoters got more than their money's worth from Ali, who worked hard in the gym and doing his part to sell the fight. Ali proved to be cheap at any price, as fans flocked to see him before and during the match. The mouth that roared brought more interest to this bout than most championship contests.

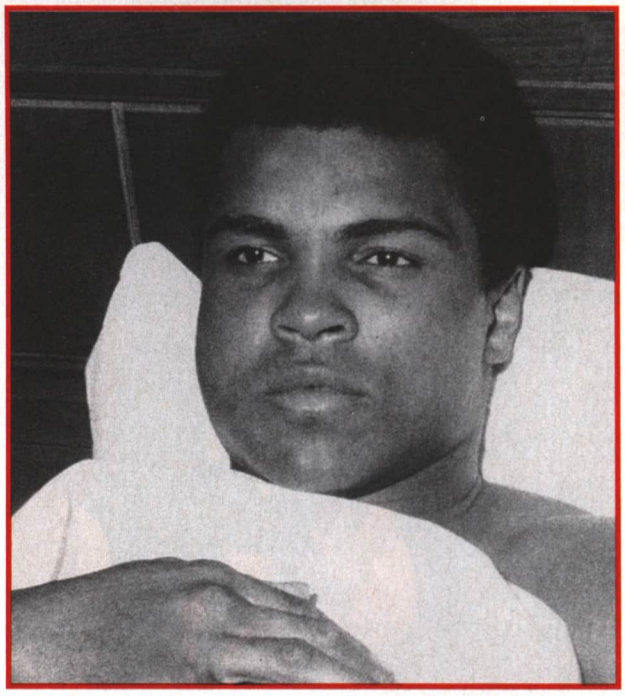
Norton lost to Ali after 12 hard-fought rounds on September 10, 1972. Though he was heartbroken over the outcome, Ken must have realized his opponent had made his name a household word. After the defeat, Norton couldn't have suspected he had earned a title shot against Foreman.

Ali and Frazier, neither one champion, discovered people still wished to see them fight. After Ali whipped Rudi Lubbers on October 20, 1973, he prepared himself for a rematch against the only man he had fought and never beaten.

Superfight II had a pre-fight as turbulent as any in boxing. Frazier stood helplessly by in the face of Ali's barbed comments. The publicity drums had to be beaten, however, and the two men, at the crossroads of their careers, tore into each other verbally, a horrible mismatch. When Frazier physically attacked Ali in a television studio three days before the fight, Ali was surprised and Joe was humiliated.

Superfight II proved to be a pale imitation of its predecessor. Frazier seemed to have lost the sting in his punches while Ali could only sporadically recall the butterfly and bee he once was. Still, the charisma of the two made it an exciting and enormously profitable event.

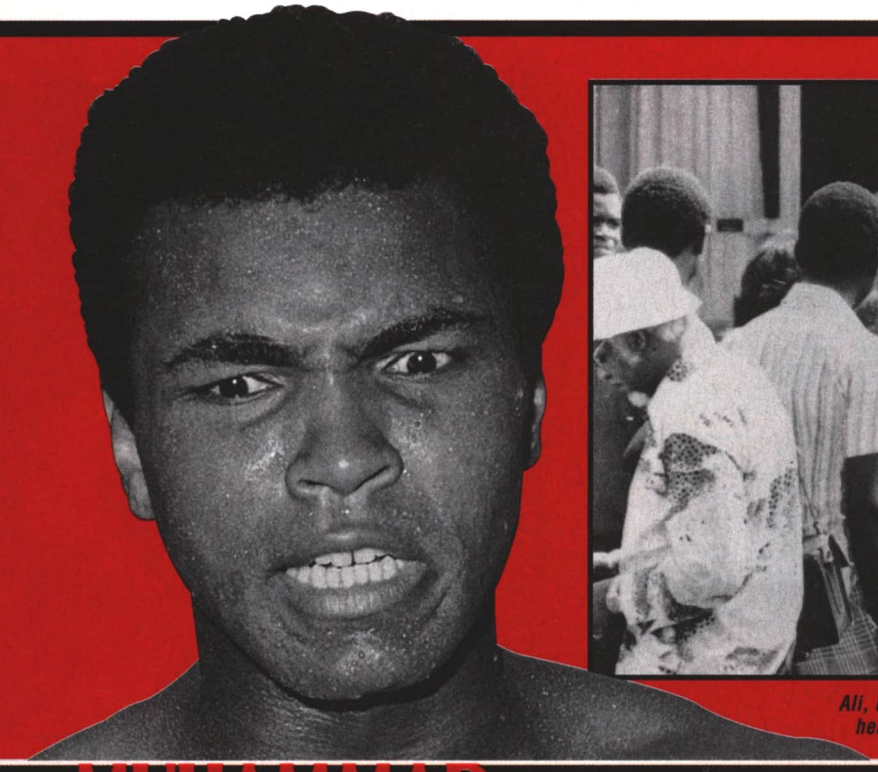
Ali was awarded the decision. Experts decided neither man posed a threat to Foreman's championship.

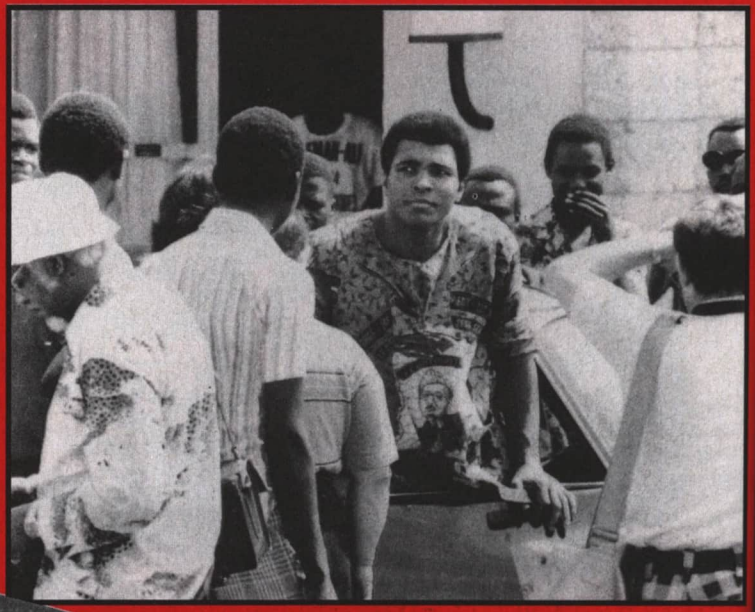


*Ali fought much of his bout against Ken Norton in 1973 with a broken jaw, absorbing his second loss. After a 90-minute operation, the surgeon said: "I can't fathom how he could go the whole fight like that."*

Ali signed to fight Foreman in September in the emerging African nation of Zaire. Both fighters were promised $5 million for their services. It was the richest sporting event in history, a fitting tribute to a man who resurrected boxing through the sheer force of his personality.

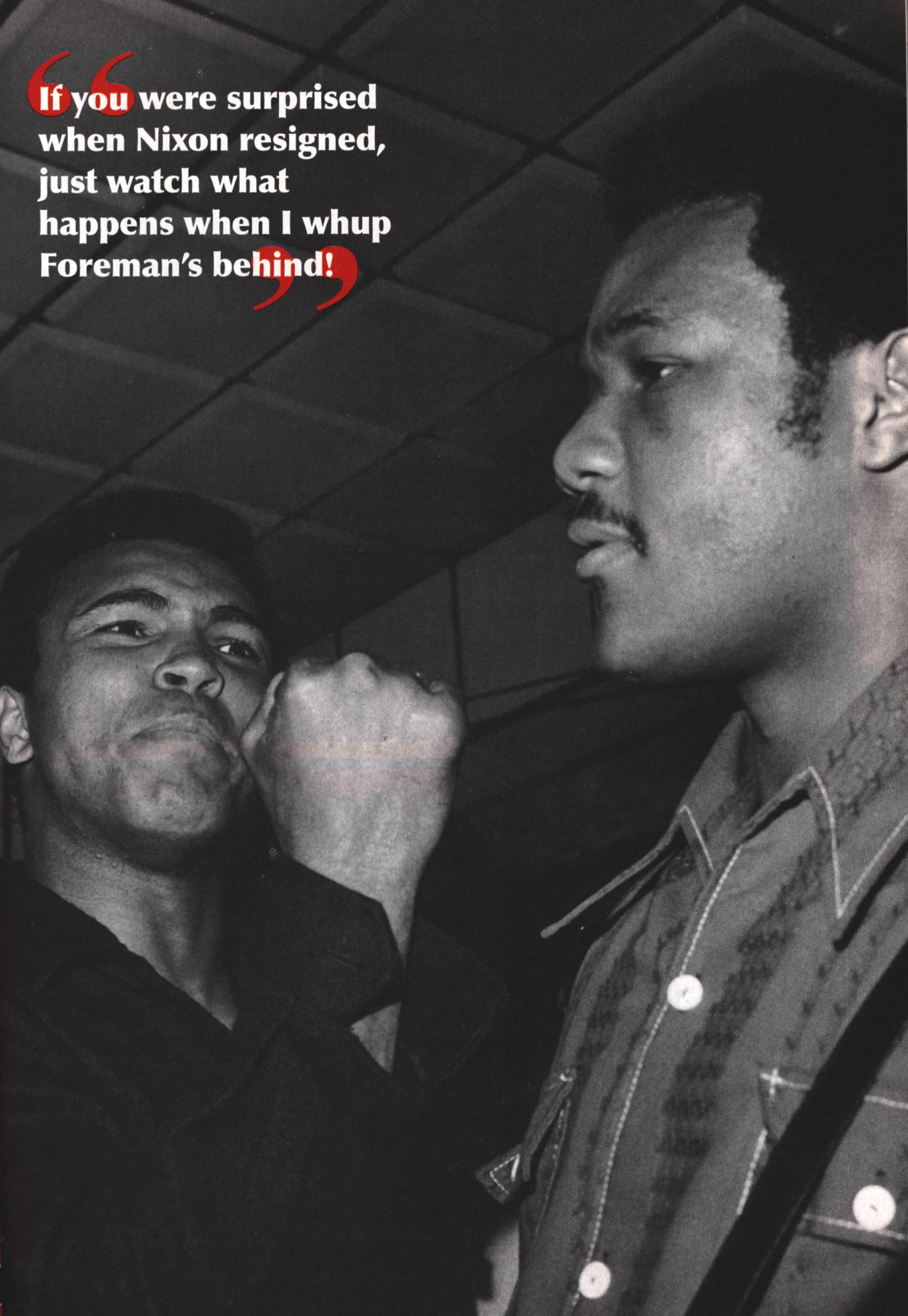
The smart money, for the second time in 10 years, went against Ali. After a one-month postponement due to a cut over his left eye, Foreman came to the weigh-in at a lithe 220 pounds. With Foreman in shape, the odds swelled to 3-1 by





*Ali, in Zaire, days before his challenge of heavyweight champ George Foreman.*

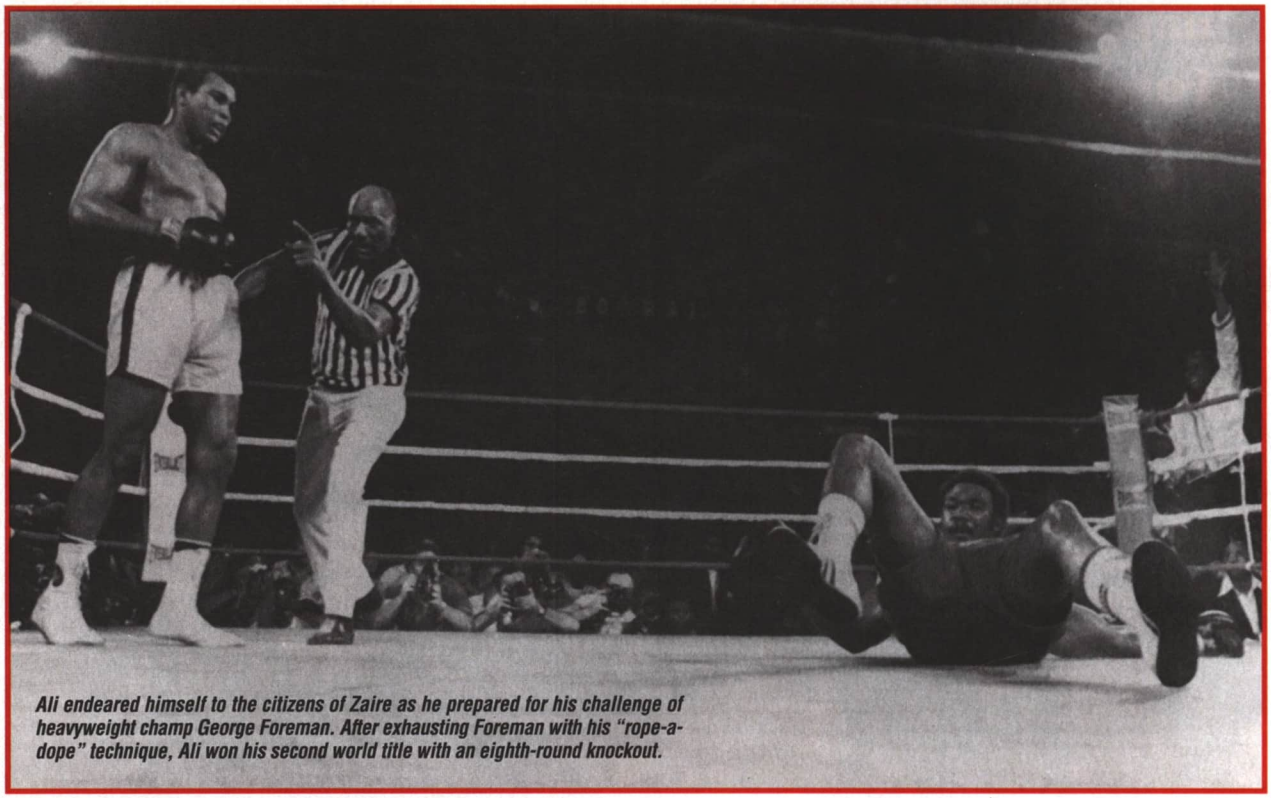
MUHAMMAD *Ali*


"If you were surprised when Nixon resigned, just watch what happens when I whup Foreman's behind!"

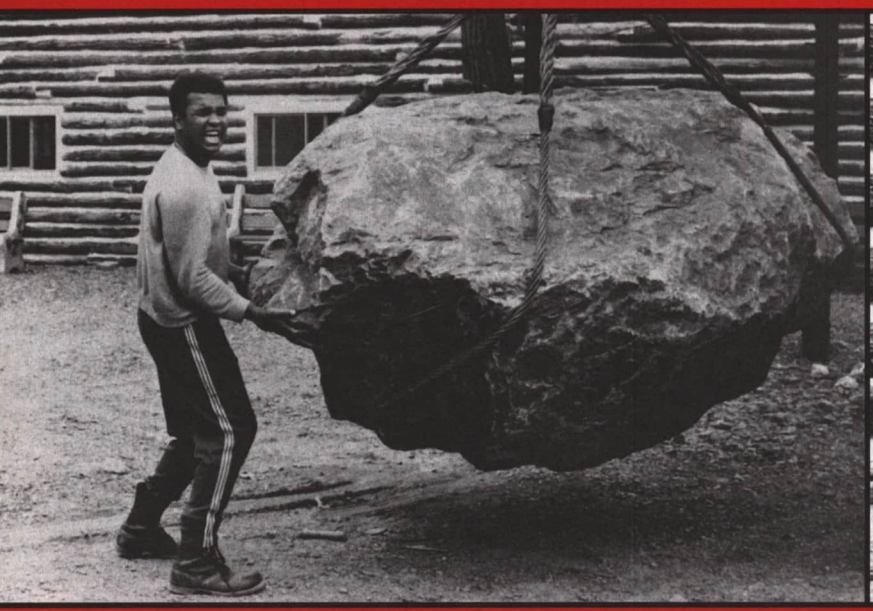
fight time. Not since the Liston fight had Muhammad been such an underdog.

And not since the Liston fight had Ali so humiliated an opponent. George Foreman looked like a rank amateur against one of the most brilliant ring tacticians who ever lived. Ali allowed Foreman to punch himself out for eight rounds and then delivered a fast five-punch combination to send the heavyweight champion to the canvas. As referee Zack Clayton counted over the exhausted Foreman, Muhammad Ali became only the second man in history to win back the heavyweight title.

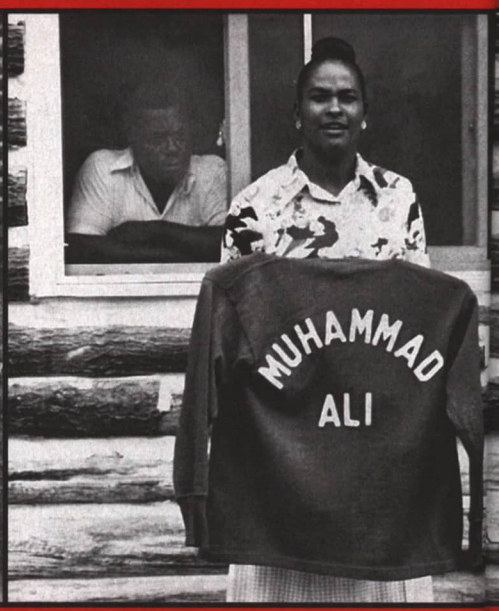
If Ali had retired after his fight with Foreman, he certainly would have gone down as one of the all-time greats. By electing to continue fighting, he not only added to his legend, but his bank account as well.



*Ali endeared himself to the citizens of Zaire as he prepared for his challenge of heavyweight champ George Foreman. After exhausting Foreman with his "rope-a-dope" technique, Ali won his second world title with an eighth-round knockout.*



*Maneuvering this bolder was good preparation for Ali's upcoming fight with George Foreman.*



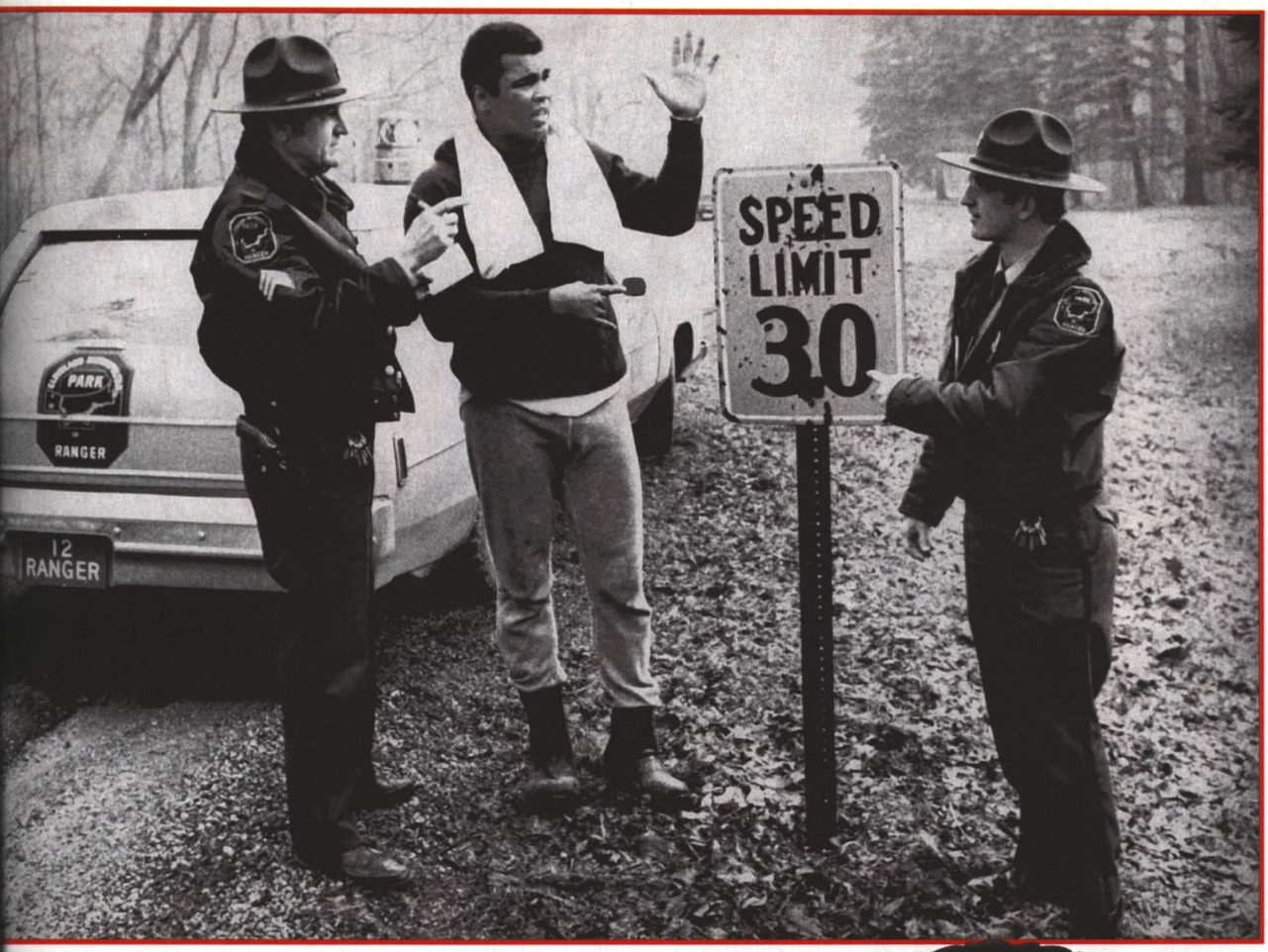

*Khalilah greets the press during a media day at Ali's training complex in Deer Lake, Pennsylvania, in 1974.*

Threats against his life, Ali said, came from "some crank who wanted to start something." He called them "a very bad joke."

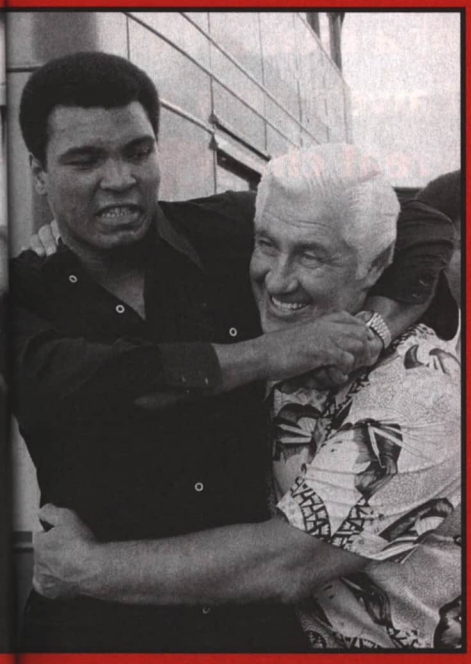
When Ali toured the White House in '74, President Ford made sure he got to meet him.

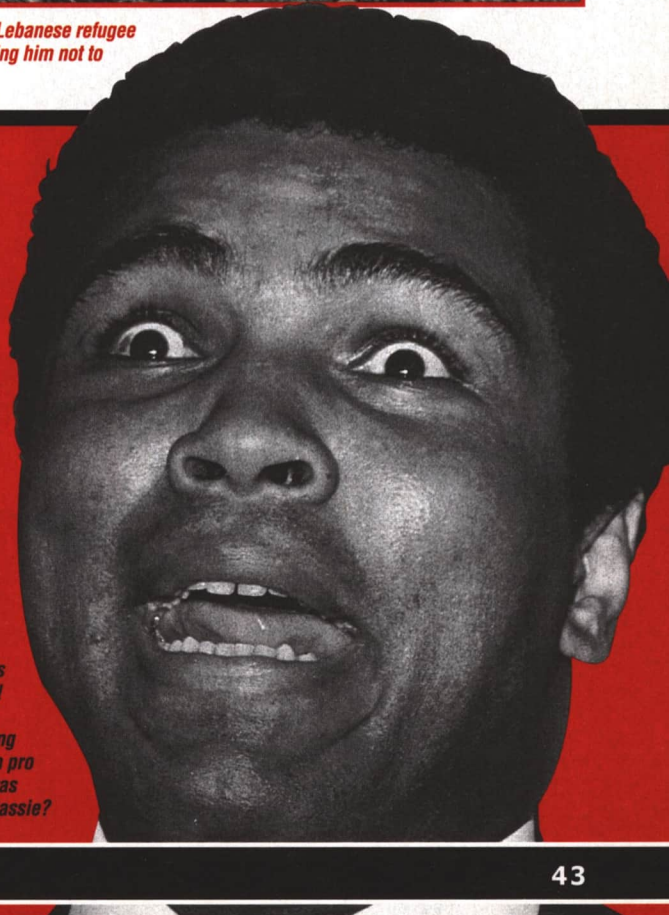
He made an easy $1.5 million for a 15th-round stoppage of journeyman Chuck Wepner on March 24, 1975, and went on to collect similar-sized purses for his 11th-round TKO of Ron Lyle and a 15-round decision over Joe Bugner.

Ali stepped up the competition on October 1, 1975, when he fought Joe Frazier in the "Thrilla In Manila." For 14 savage and mesmerizing rounds, each man fought like few heavyweights ever have, and by the end of the fight, they were hurt,



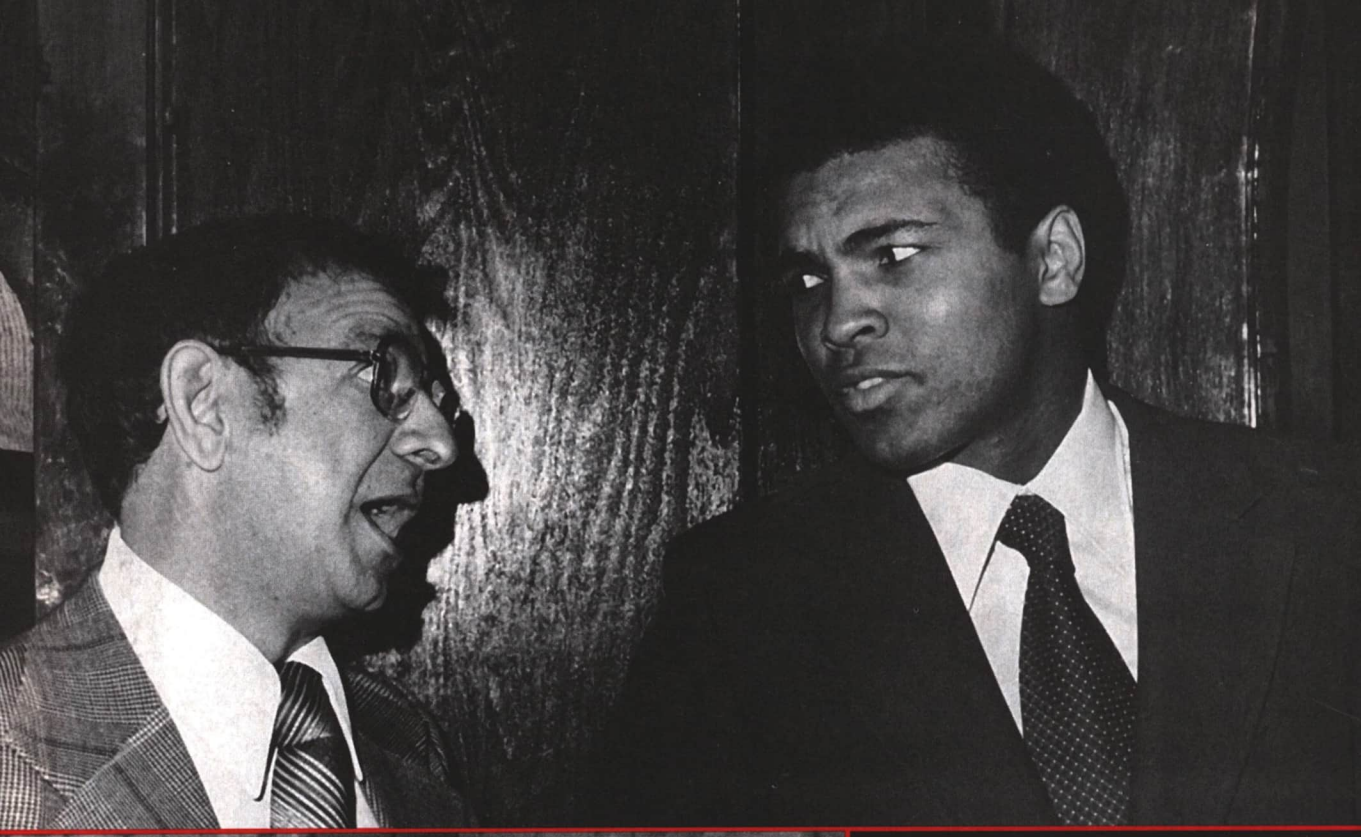

*So diverse was the man that he can be in the presence of Palestinian guerrillas in a Lebanese refugee camp (opposite) and then goof around with park rangers in Cleveland who are warning him not to jog in excess of the speed limit (above).*





*Far Left: If you thought John F. Kennedy Jr.'s right to the nose was rough, we won't even show you the photo of Ali's counter right to the body!*

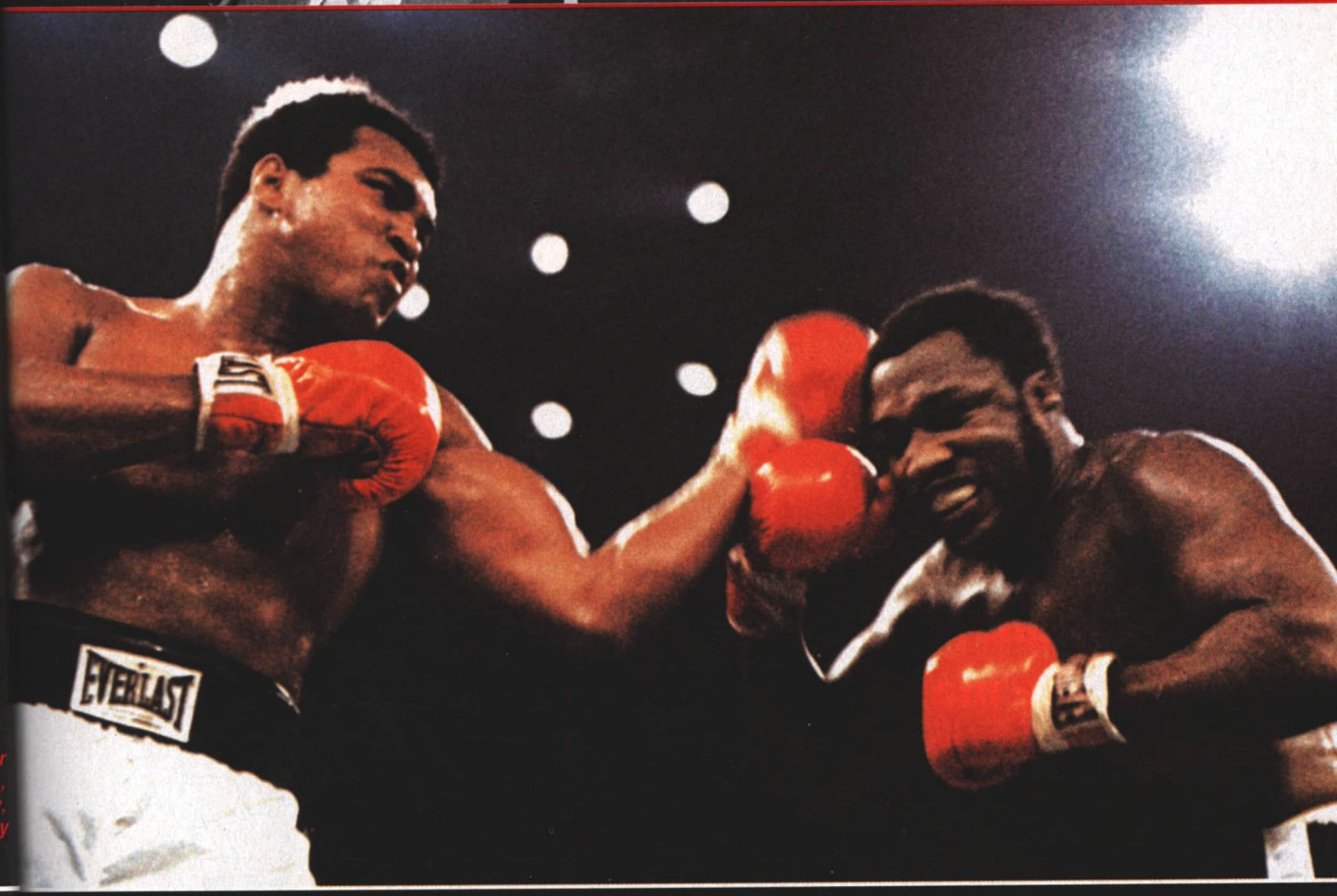
*Left: Ali admits to getting much of his schtick from pro wrestling, and who was schtickier than Freddie Blassie?*



**"Man, I hit him with punches that'd bring down the walls of a city. ... Lawdy, Lawdy, he's a great champion."**

***-Joe Frazier***

*At left, Ali and Frazier lift talk show host Dick Cavett to thei level. Above, Dundee has some words for Ali. Opposite top the fighters have words for each other. And opposite below Ali won the disappointing second fight of their classic trilog in 1974 by unanimous decision.*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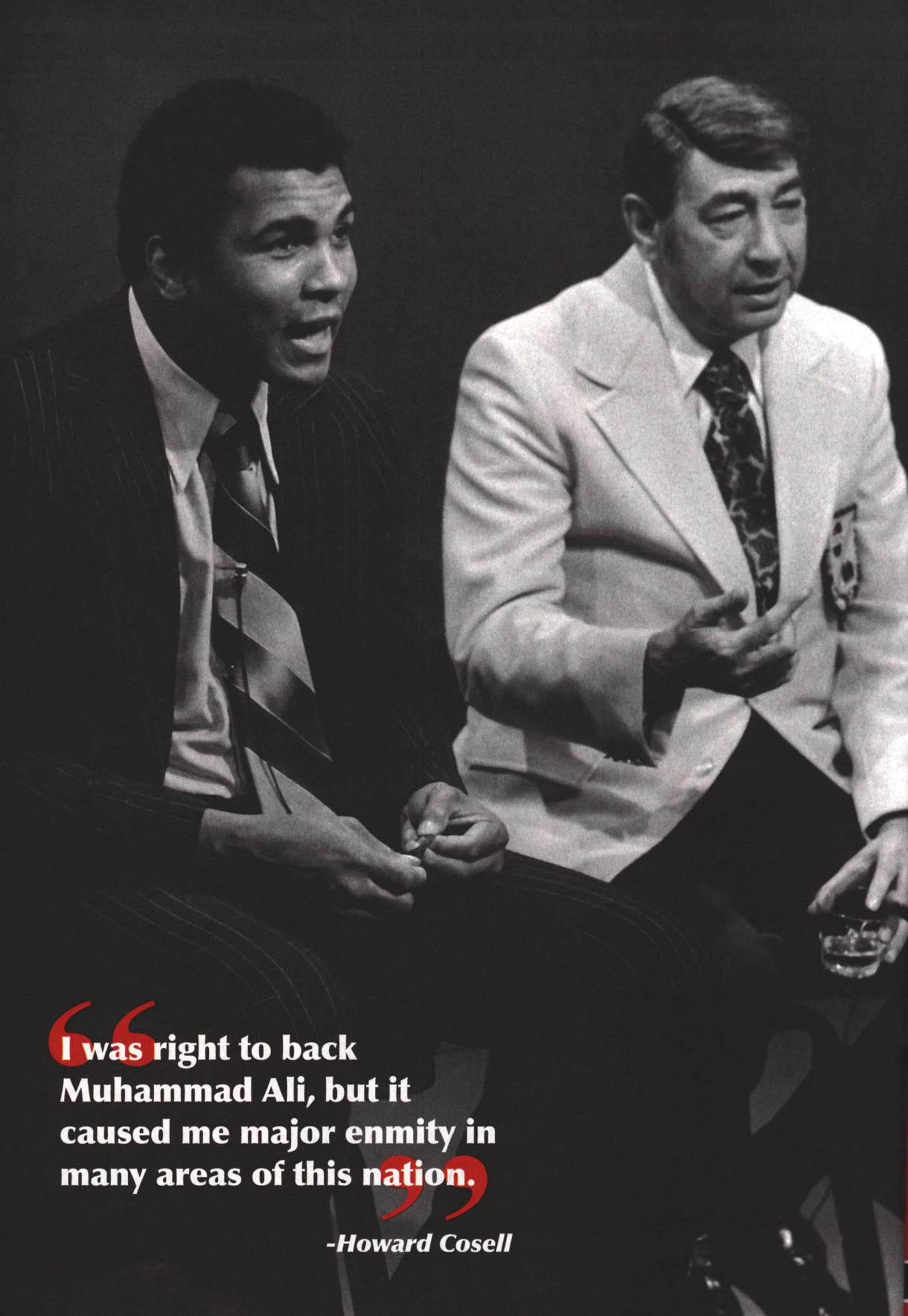


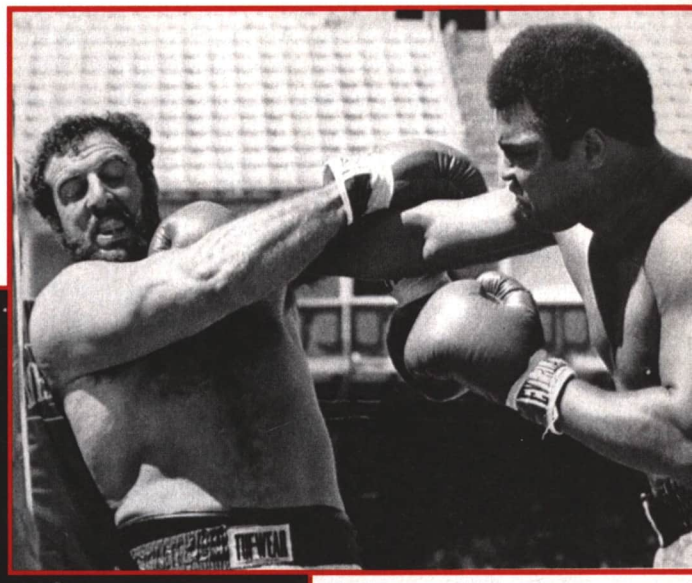
"I was right to back Muhammad Ali, but it caused me major enmity in many areas of this nation."

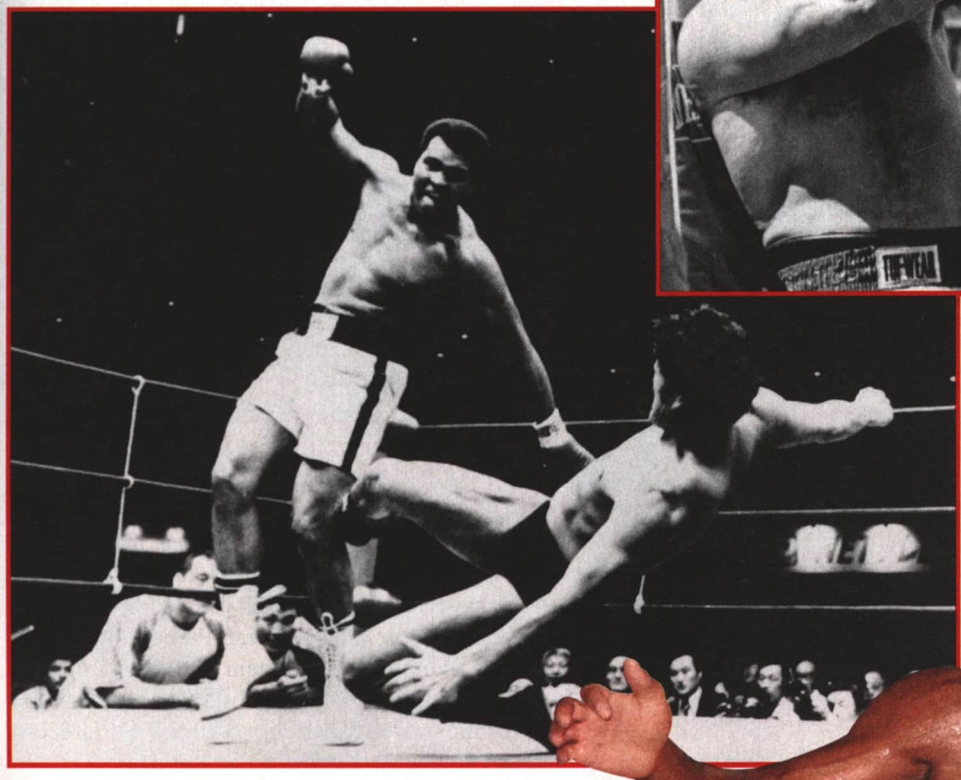
*-Howard Cosell*

dehydrated, and completely exhausted. Ali emerged as the winner when Frazier's cornerman, Eddie Futch, refused to allow his gallant warrior to continue.

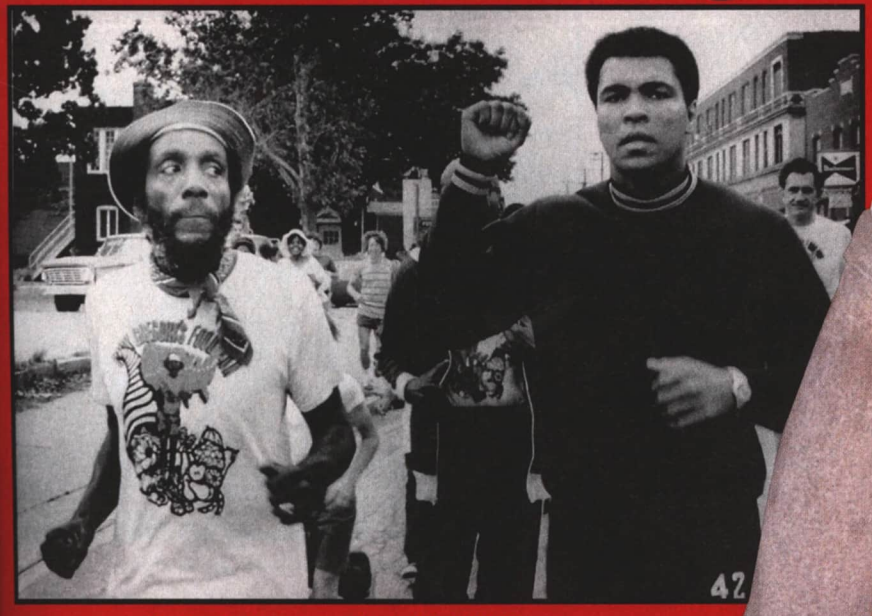
"Man, I hit him with punches that'd bring down the walls of a city," Frazier later said. "Lawdy, Lawdy, he's a great champion."

In 1976, Ali knocked out both Jean-Pierre Coopman and Richard Dunn in five rounds and earned a decision over





*Ali never seemed to be afraid that his reputation could take a hit by engaging in exhibitions, such as against pro wrestler Antonio Inoki in 1976 (left) and football star Lyle Alzado in 1979 (above).*



*The Greatest joins comedian/activist Dick Gregory in his nationwide run in 1976 to protest hunger.*

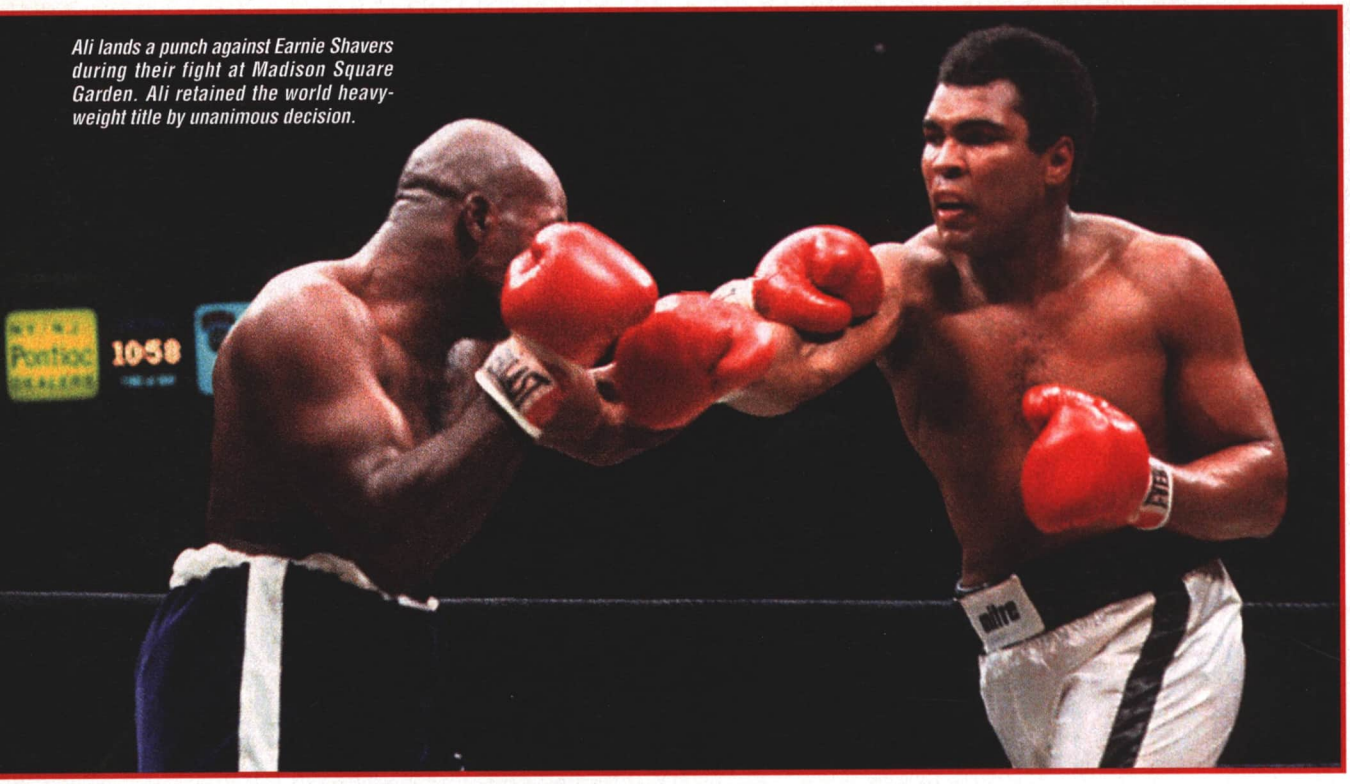
Jimmy Young. Against Young, Ali came in at 230 pounds, woefully out of shape. His all-time worst performance, however, came on June 25, when he engaged in a boxing-wrestling exhibition with Antonio Inoki in Tokyo. All The Greatest got for his efforts were blood clots and damaged muscles as Inoki lay on his back, kicking Ali's legs for 15 rounds.

Three months later, on September 28, Ali returned to the boxing ring to face Ken Norton. He took Norton seriously and was in excellent shape. Good thing, too, because the fight would come down to the final round. Norton, believing he had won, coasted for 2½ minutes of the 15th round. But Ali fought hard, winning the round and the bout in a controversial decision.

*Six weeks before their 1977 title fight, Ali offers Alfredo Evangelista a glimmer of hope (opposite). Perhaps Ali was training on his Crisp Crunch bars at the time (above).*

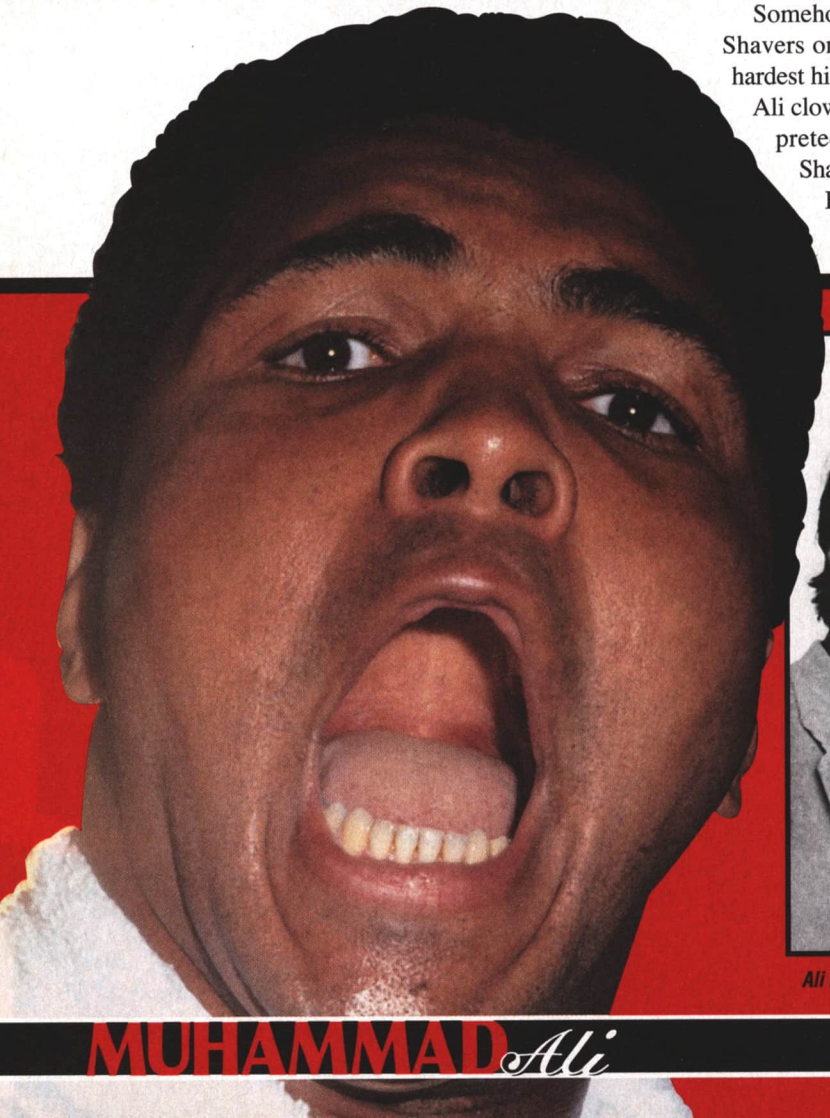
By now, though, it was all too clear that Ali's boxing skills were starting to deteriorate. And while he may have beaten Norton, his jab and combinations were no longer forces to fear. Perhaps sensing his decline, Ali didn't fight again until May 16, 1977, when he faced Alfredo Evangelista. The Spaniard only had 19 months of experience, and yet Ali lumbered through 15 rounds before winning a decision.

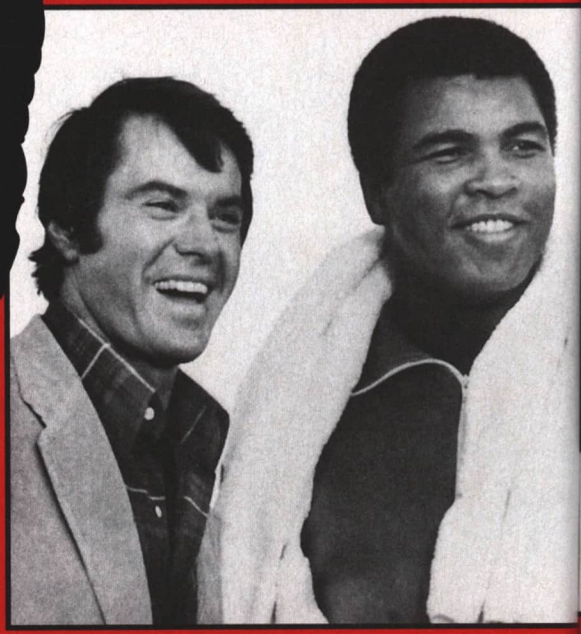
*Ali talks with President Jimmy Carter in 1977.*



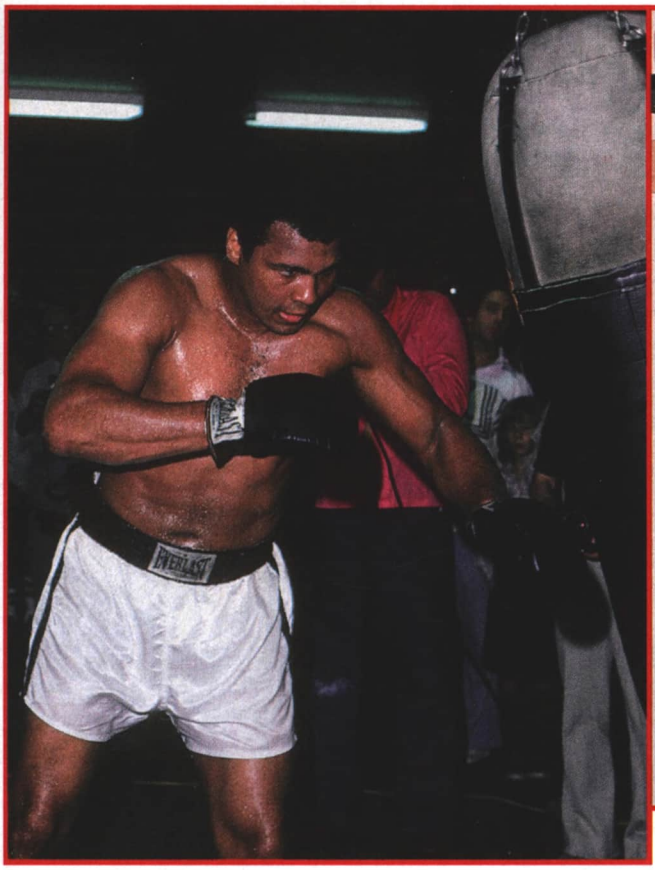

*Ali lands a punch against Earnie Shavers during their fight at Madison Square Garden. Ali retained the world heavyweight title by unanimous decision.*

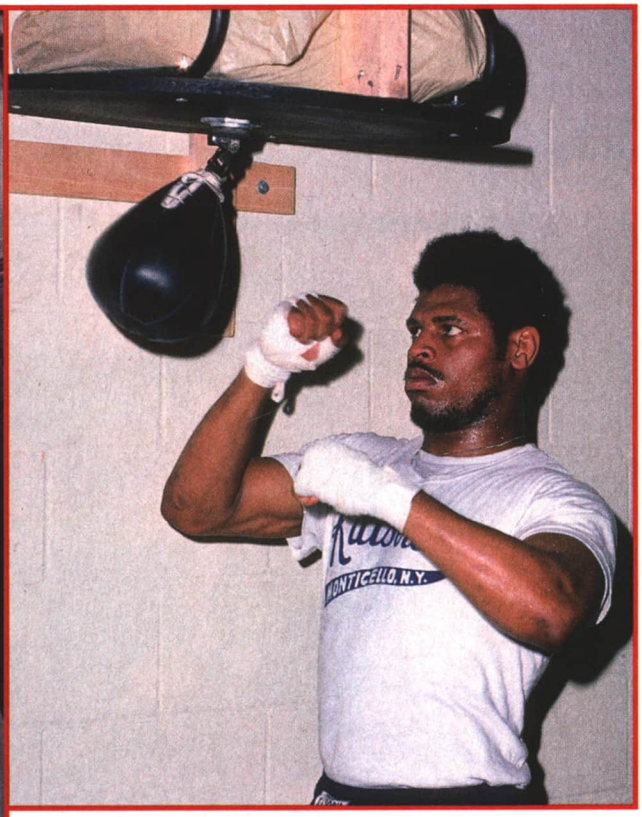
Somehow, some way, Ali found it in him to fight Earnie Shavers on September 29, 1977. Shavers, one of the ring's hardest hitters, hurt Ali in round two with a concussive right. Ali clowned it up after the blow landed, and Shavers interpreted his actions to mean that he wasn't hurt. What Shavers didn't know was that Ali indeed had been hurt. By not trying to finish him off, Shavers may have missed his chance to become champion.





*Ali made a cameo appearance in Robert Urich's "Vega$" in 1978.*

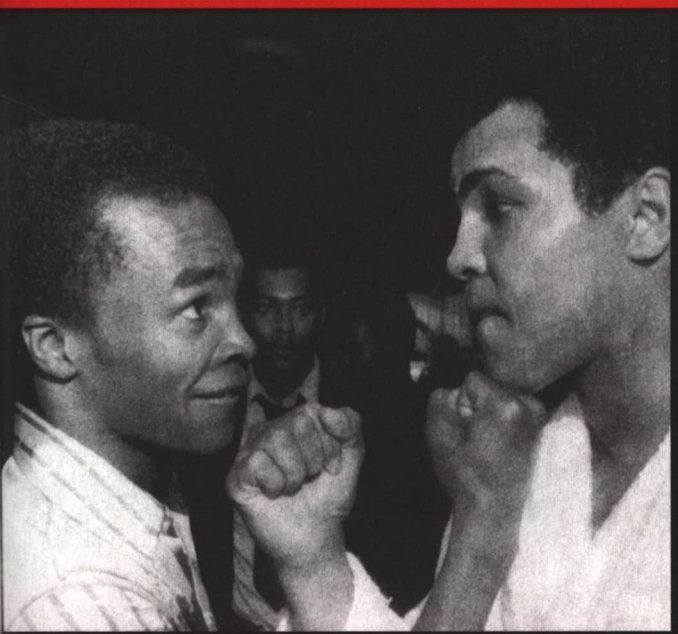



*Above, Leon Spinks trains for his first bout against Ali in January 1978. At left, Ali prepares for the rematch in Deer Lake, Pennsylvania, in September.*

The decision win over Shavers had been extremely painful for Ali, and yet the pull of the sport was too great for him to retire. For their February 15, 1978, title bout, he was an overwhelming favorite against Olympic gold medalist Leon Spinks. Spinks, after all, had had just seven pro fights. But as their bout wore on, Ali wore down, and Spinks took the title by decision in one of the biggest upsets in history.

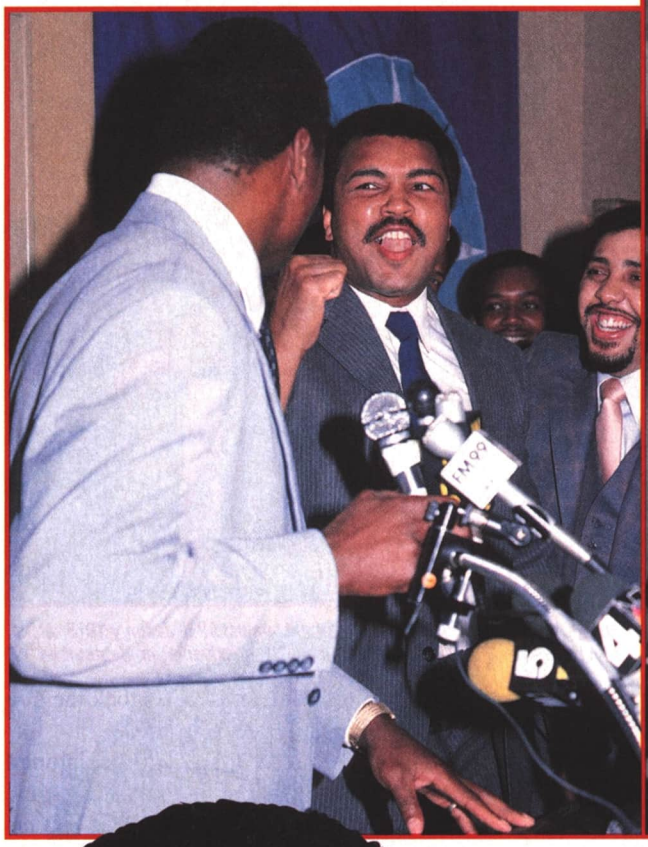
Seven months later, Ali got in shape and decisioned Spinks to regain the title and become the only three-time heavyweight champion. More than ever, Ali realized that his

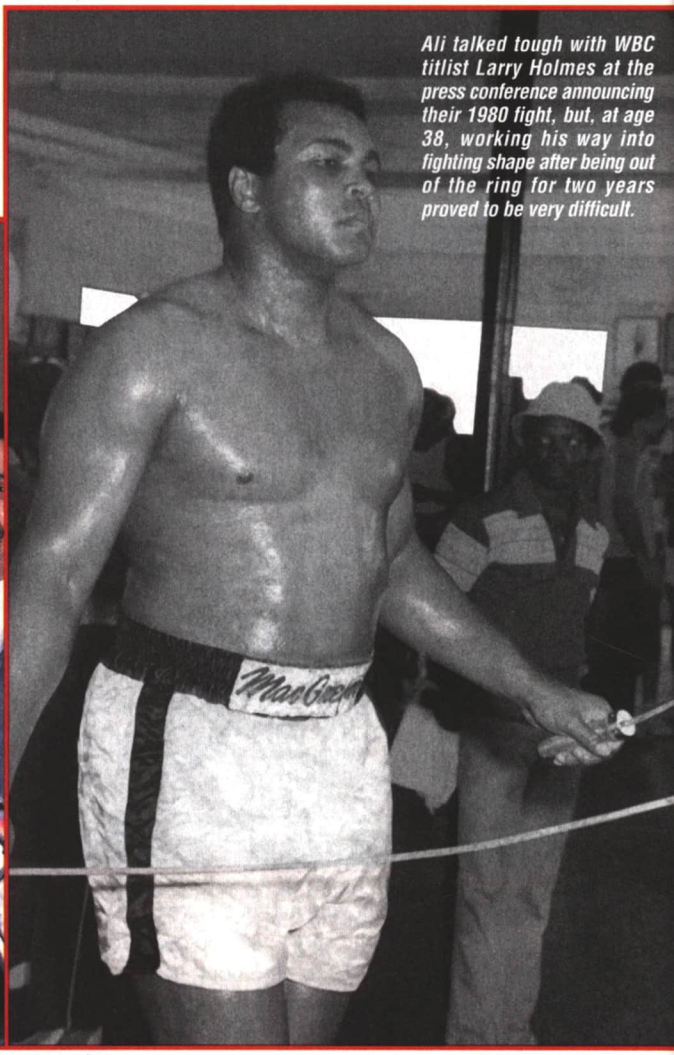


*A catchweight encounter in 1977 between "The Sweetest" and "The Greatest."*

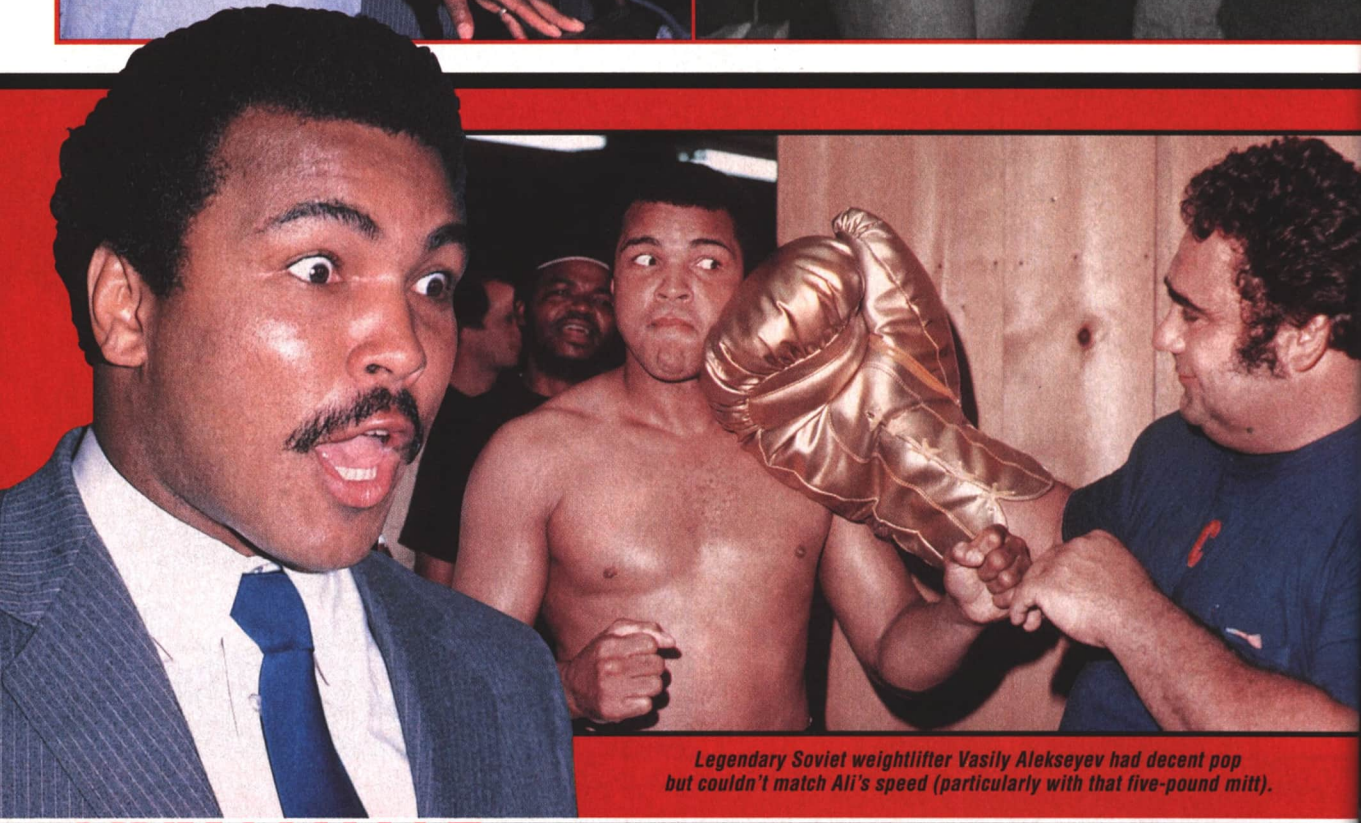
*Alexis Arguello worked under Ali for Champion Sports Management in 1984.*

fighting days were over. He announced his retirement in 1979. It was during this period when Ali's medical problems surfaced. There was some evidence of speech difficulty but the Nevada State Athletic Commission still gave him a clean bill of health so he could unretire and fight Larry Holmes on October 2, 1980.





*Ali talked tough with WBC titlist Larry Holmes at the press conference announcing their 1980 fight, but, at age 38, working his way into fighting shape after being out of the ring for two years proved to be very difficult.*



*Legendary Soviet weightlifter Vasily Alekseyev had decent pop but couldn't match Ali's speed (particularly with that five-pound mitt).*

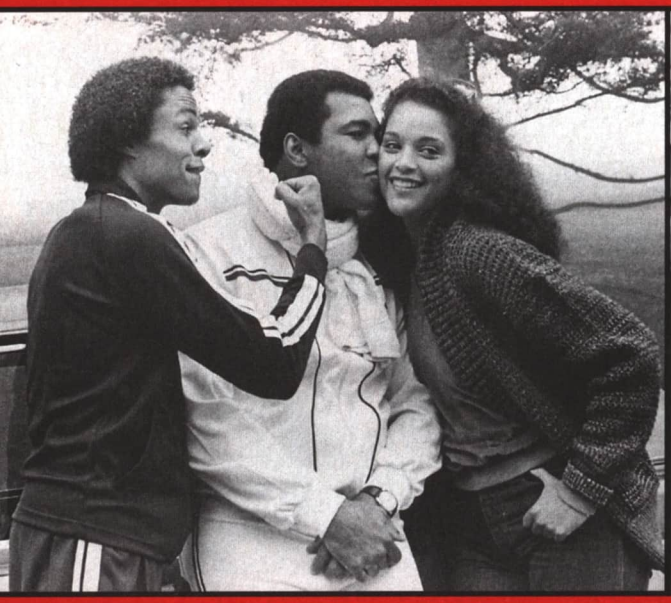
*Seven years after his last fight, in 1988, Ali prays with a group of Muslim boys at a mosque in Khartoum, Sudan. Ali was in Africa visiting camps of people displaced by war and famine.*

*Helping promote the first professional fight card in China since the rise of Communism, The Greatest is surrounded by children at the Beijing No. 1 Experimental Primary School in 1993.*

*They never became friends, but there was no denying the level of professional respect that existed between Ali and Frazier, who are together for the announcement of the* **Champions Forever** *videotape in 1989.*

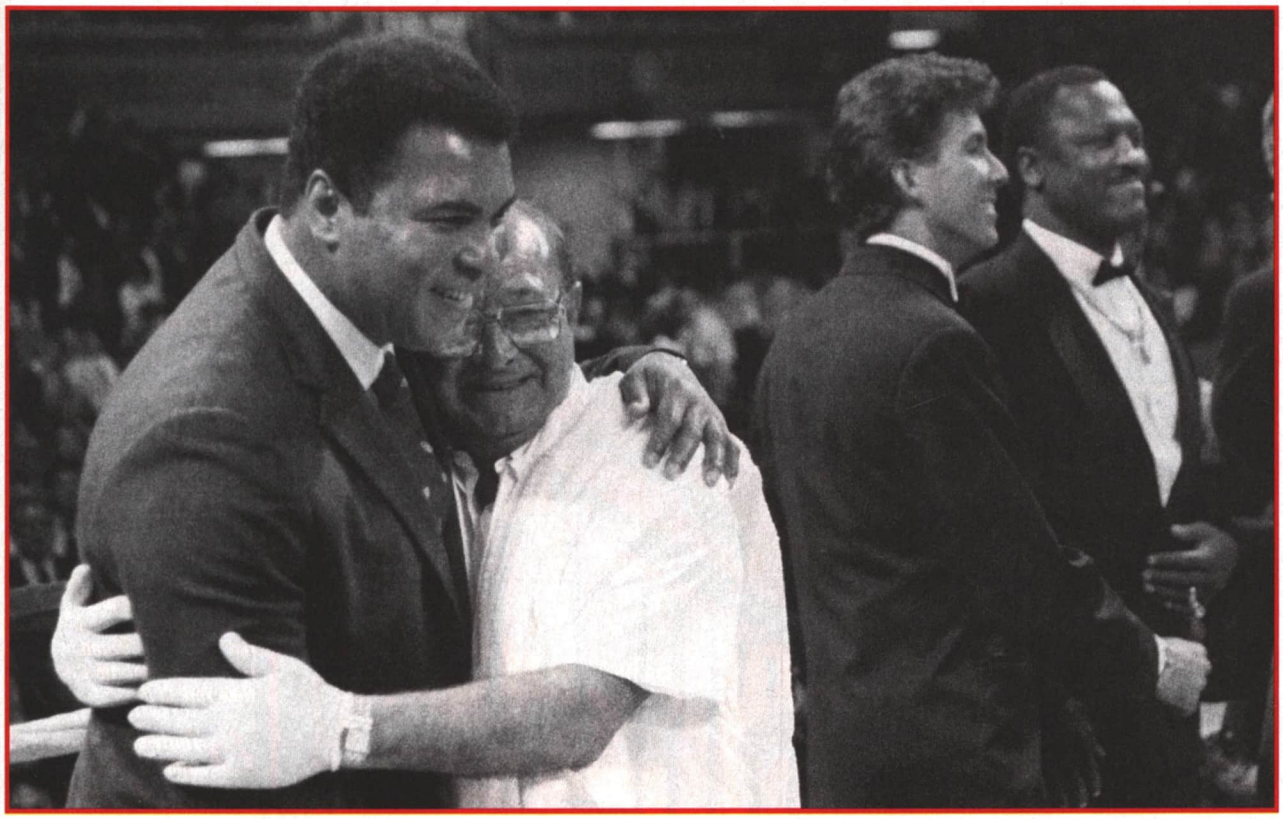
Few gave Ali a chance to win, but he entered the ring that night resembling a man in his late 20s. His taut body carried only 217 pounds. But it was all a mirage. (He had been taking a thyroid medication prior to the fight that had drained him of his energy.) In Round One, it was evident that Ali was a shell of a once-great fighter. Mercifully, the slaughter was stopped after 10 rounds.

He fought once more, on December 11, 1981, when he faced Trevor Berbick in Nassau, the Bahamas. Berbick displayed little skill but had enough to decision the 39-year-old



*Not much Leon Isaac Kennedy can do when Ali moves in on his wife, Jayne, during the filming of* **Body And Soul**.

*Sugar Ray Robinson unleashes a jab during a black-tie dinner in Ali's honor in 1985.*



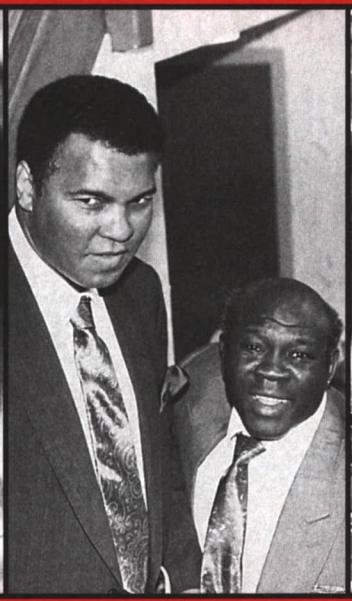
*Ali and Dundee are reunited before the start of the George Foreman-Evander Holyfield fight in Atlantic City in 1991. In the background are Joe Frazier and Michael Buffer, the onetime president of the Muhammad Ali Fan Club.*

Ali, who finally confessed to a tear-filled gathering that he was through.

As the years passed, Ali's health declined further. In 1984, he checked into Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York. Doctors conducted diagnostic tests that revealed that he was suffering from Parkinson's Syndrome. Ali's once-animated face began to take on a frozen expression. And his eyes, once filled with life, were often lifeless.

One only had to look in the eyes of his admirers at one of his appearances to understand just what he meant to the world. ■

*Ali gets a facial in Louisville in 1985.*

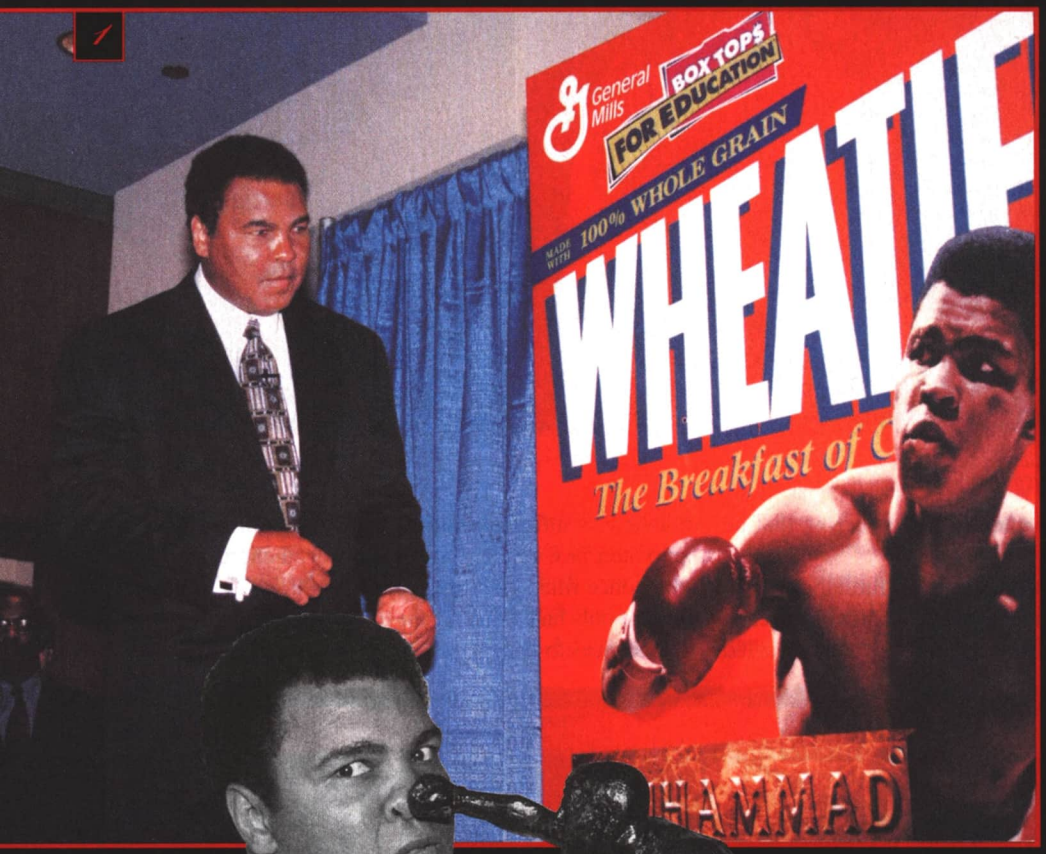


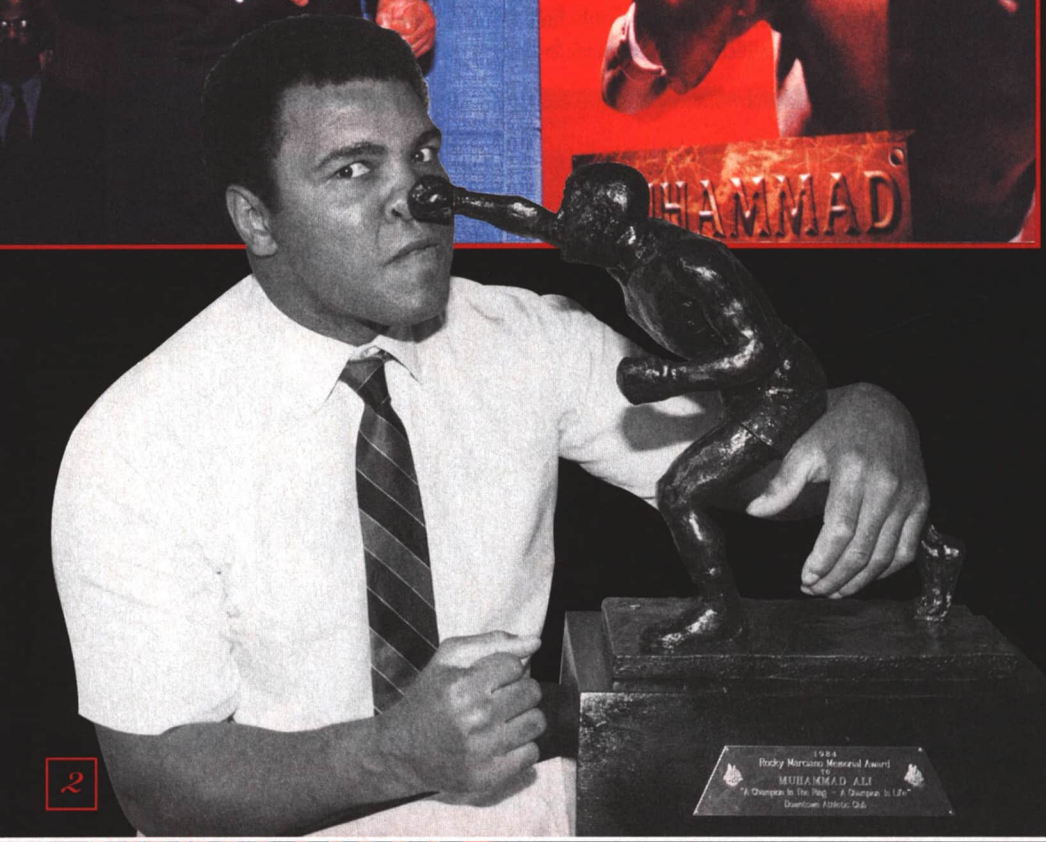
*Ali and Emile Griffith get together at the Hall of Fame in 1990.*

*Ali celebrates his 50th birthday in Los Angeles with Raven-Symone (in his arms), Dustin Hoffman (right), and Ella Fitzgerald (far left).*

# Post-Career Accolades of MUHAMMAD Ali

*"The Greatest" had many accolades in his lifetime. These are but a few.*




**1** It wasn't until 1999 that General Foods woke up, smelled the coffee, and put "The Greatest" on the cover of their Wheaties box.

**2** A champion in the ring, a champion in life: Ali is the recipient of the 1984 Rocky Marciano Memorial Award, presented by the Downtown Athletic Club in New York City.

**3** Thirty-six years after winning Olympic gold in Rome, Ali was given the high honor of lighting the Olympic flame at the opening ceremonies of the 1996 Games in Atlanta.

**4** The Muhammad Ali Center, a $75-million, six-story building overlooking the Ohio River, opened in November 2005.

**5** Among the items on exhibit at The Muhammad Ali Center is the torch Ali used to ignite the Olympic flame in '96.

**6** With wife Lonnie on his arm, Ali receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award, from George W. Bush at a White House ceremony in 2005.

**7** Proud Papa poses with Laila Ali after her 2002 victory over Suzy Taylor in Las Vegas (right). Madison Avenue was quick to capitalize on the pair's popularity, with Adidas unveiling a wallscape in Harlem for a new advertising campaign (left).

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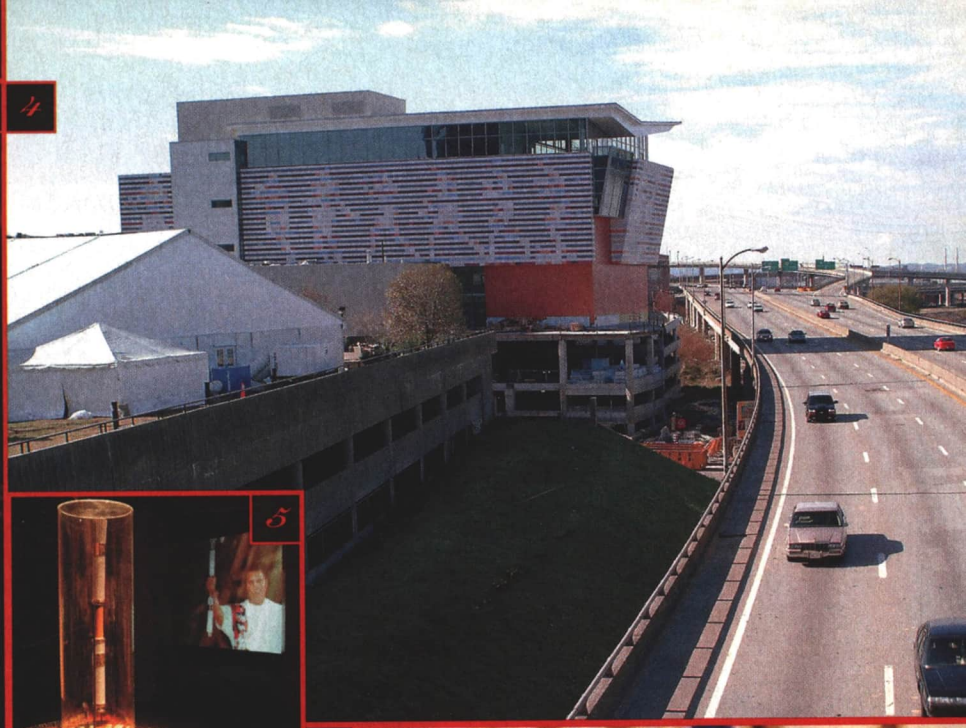

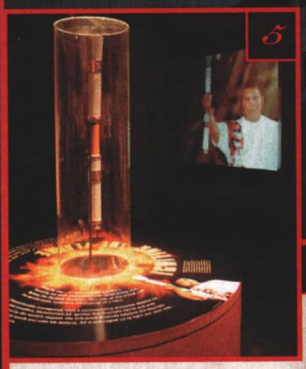

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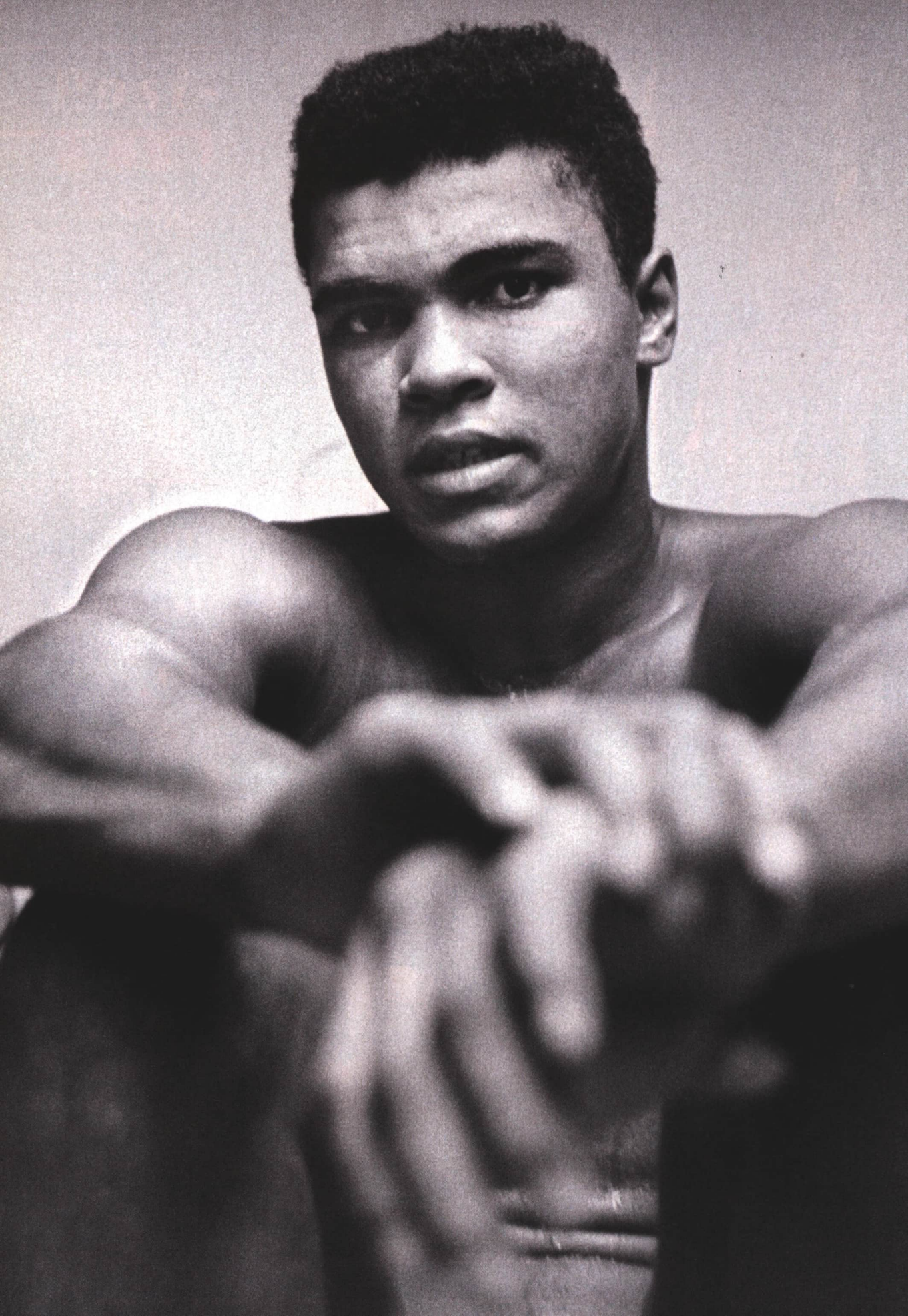


# MUHAMMAD *Ali*

# Fight-by-Fight

The legend of Muhammad Ali seemed to grow every time he stepped into the ring.

The Olympic gold medalist turned pro in 1960 and was heavyweight champ only four years later. And he was only getting started. The following 17 years would see him take part in one huge fight after another, collecting fans worldwide in the process.

Thus, THE RING editors thought it was appropriate to take you on a fight-by-fight journey of Ali's career to give you an idea of how he evolved from a gifted prospect into perhaps the greatest heavyweight ever.

## Tale of the Tape

### MUHAMMAD *Ali*

**Born:** January 17, 1942
**Birth name:** Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr.
**Died:** June 3, 2016
**Hometown:** Louisville, Ky.
**Nickname:** The Greatest, People's Champion, Louisville Lip
**Division:** Heavyweight
**Stance:** Orthodox
**Height:** 6'3"
**Weight range:** 188-236¼ pounds
**Reach:** 78"
**Record:** 56-5 (37 knockouts)
**Longest winning streak:** 31 (to start his career)
**Record in world title fights:** 22-2
**Trainer:** Angelo Dundee
**International Boxing Hall of Fame:** Inducted in 1990

#### WORLD TITLE REIGNS

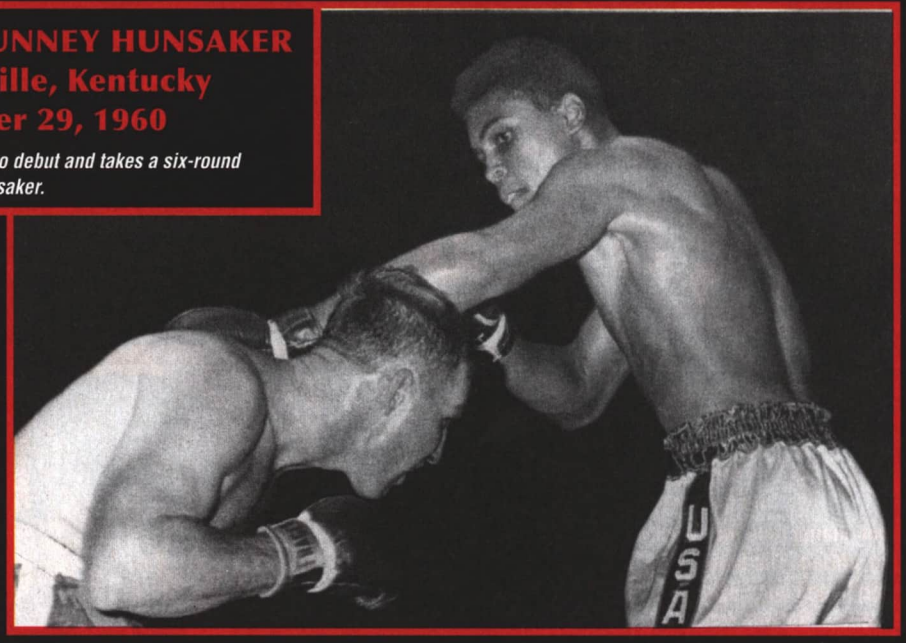
**1964** – Won the WBA, WBC and NYSAC titles by defeating Sonny Liston. Was stripped of the WBA and NYSAC titles in 1964 and 1967, respectively; retired as WBC champ in 1970.

**1974** – Regained the WBA and WBC titles by defeating George Foreman. Lost the titles to Leon Spinks in 1978.

**1978** – Regained the WBA title for the last time by defeating Spinks in a rematch. Retired as champ in 1979.

## 1 W 6 TUNNEY HUNSAKER
**Louisville, Kentucky**
**October 29, 1960**

*Cassius Clay makes his pro debut and takes a six-round decision from Tunney Hunsaker.*




## 2 KO 4 HERB SILER
**Miami Beach, Florida**
**December 27, 1960**

*Clay fights for the first time with trainer Angelo Dundee in his corner. The main event featured one of Clay's role models, Willie Pastrano, against Jesse Bowdry. Bowdry upsets Pastrano.*

## 3 KO 3 TONY ESPERTI
**Miami Beach, Florida**
**January 17, 1961**

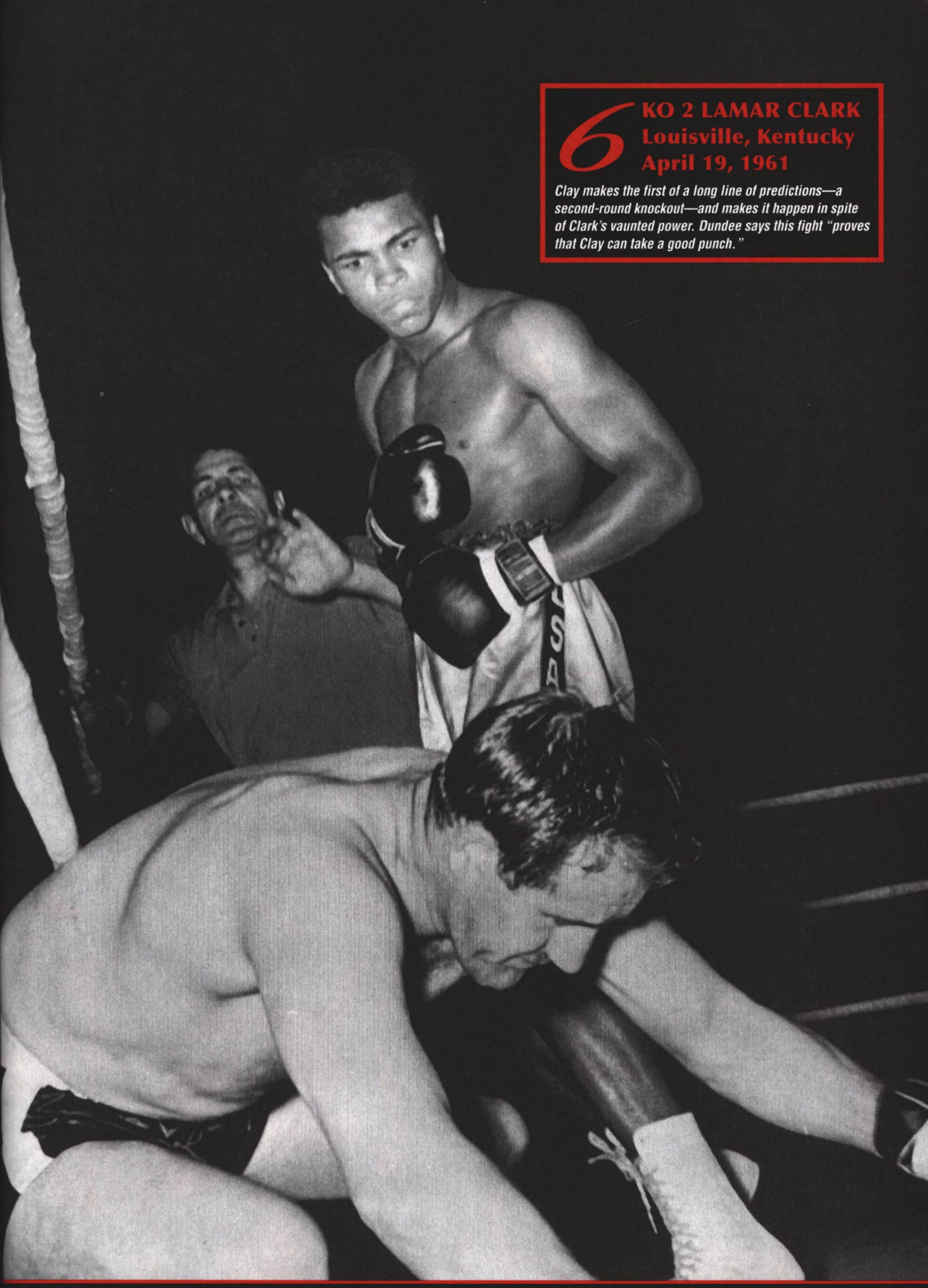
*Esperti had been out of the ring for six years when he faces Clay, who is celebrating his 19th birthday. Referee Mike Kaplin stops the fight because of damage around Esperti's eyes caused by Clay's quick, hard punches.*

## 4 KO 1 JIMMY ROBINSON
**Miami Beach, Florida**
**February 7, 1961**

*Light heavyweight Jimmy Robinson is a late replacement for Willie Gullatt and no match for Clay in a scheduled eight-round heavyweight fight. Robinson goes down as a result of a flurry of punches and can't continue.*

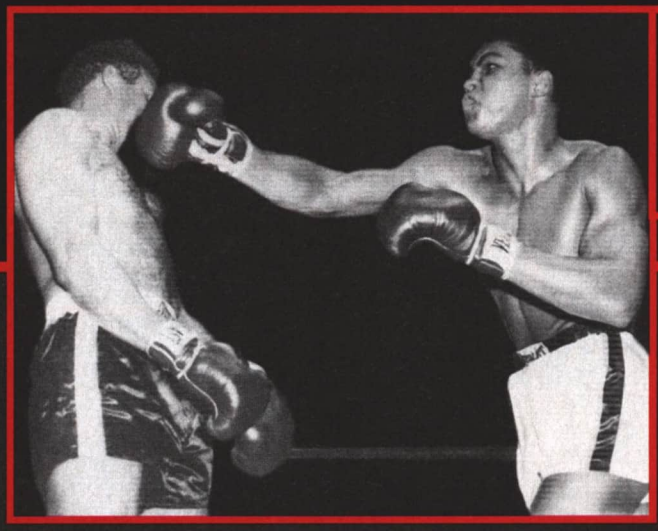
## 5 KO 6 DONNIE FLEEMAN
**Miami Beach, Florida**
**February 21, 1961**

*Fleeman has 47 fights and had once stopped hall of famer Ezzard Charles but is at the end of his career. Clay proves to be too fast and too good for the veteran, who quits in his corner with a rib injury after six rounds and never fights again.*



## 6 KO 2 LAMAR CLARK
## Louisville, Kentucky
## April 19, 1961

*Clay makes the first of a long line of predictions—a second-round knockout—and makes it happen in spite of Clark's vaunted power. Dundee says this fight "proves that Clay can take a good punch."*

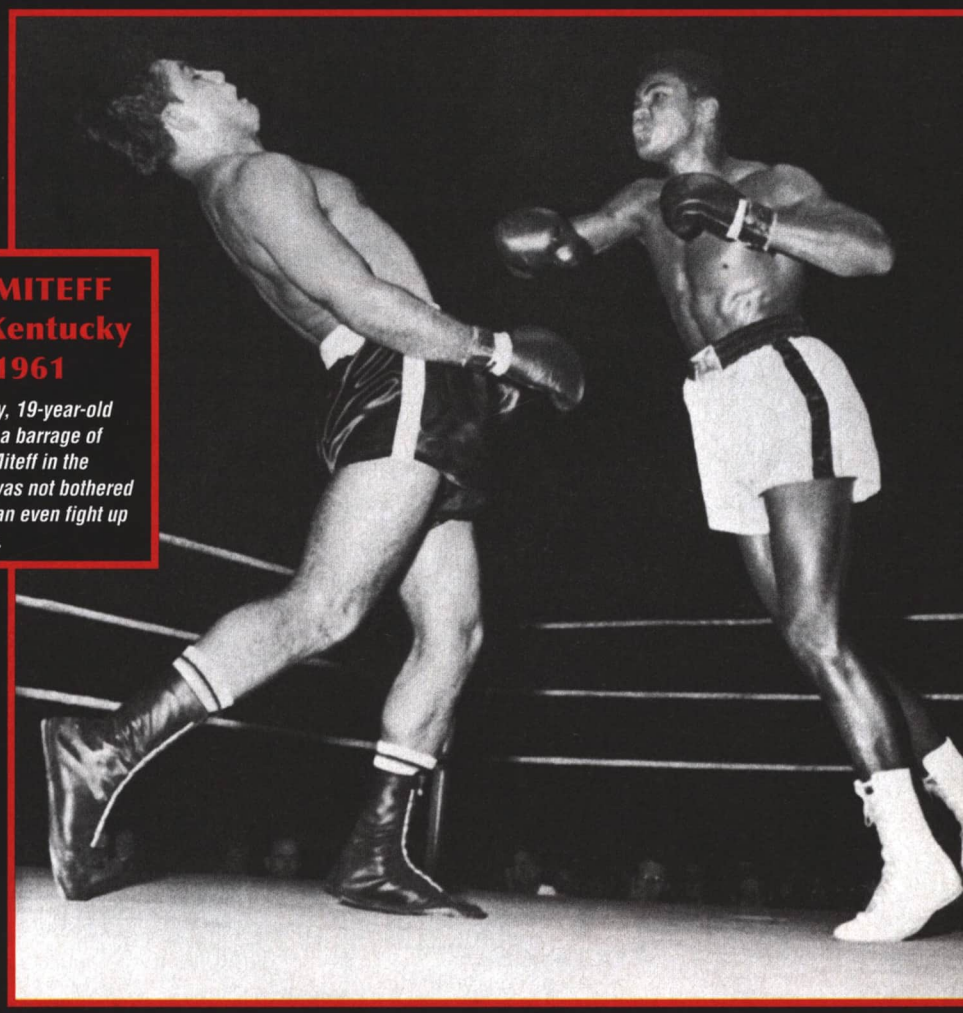


## 7 W 10 DUKE SABEDONG
**Las Vegas, Nevada**
**June 26, 1961**

*Going past the sixth round for the first time, Clay wins every round in a unanimous 10-round decision over tough veteran "Duke" Sabedong.*

## 8 W 10 ALONZO JOHNSON
**Louisville, Kentucky**
**July 22, 1961**

*In his first bout on national TV, Clay wins a unanimous 10-round decision from Alonzo Johnson and runs his record to 8-0.*

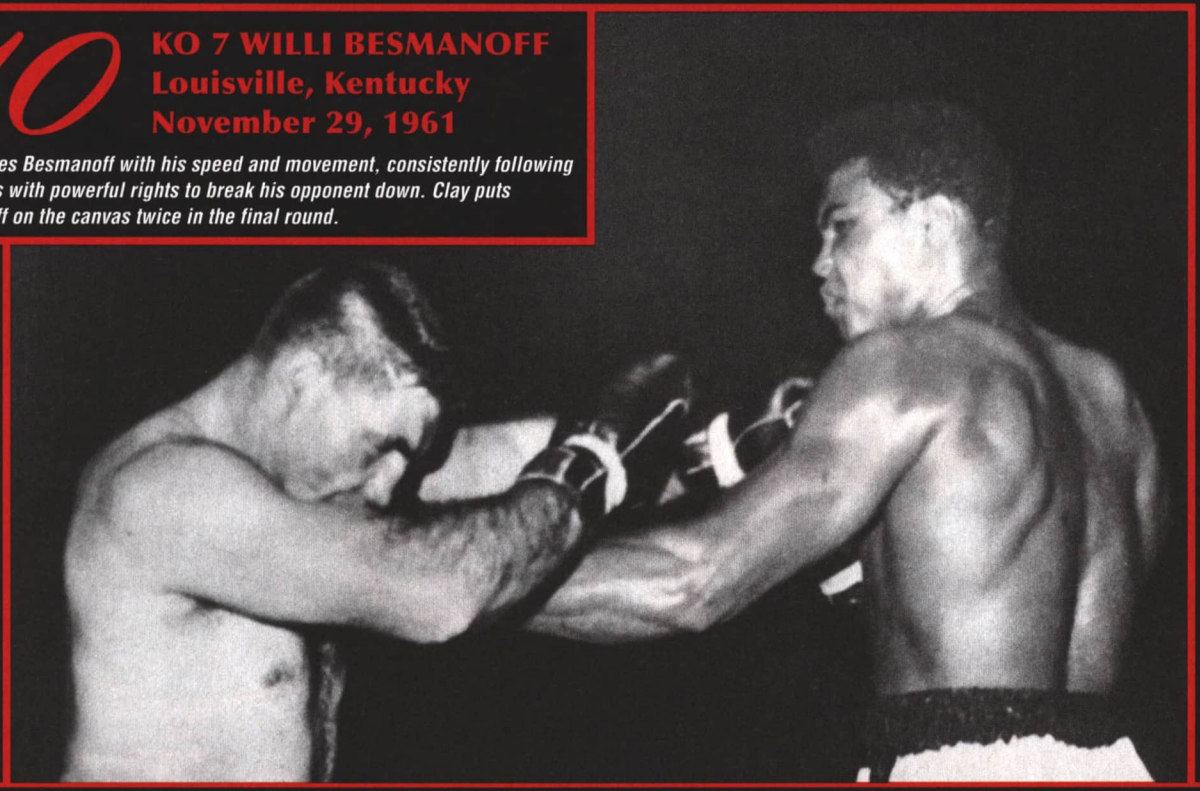


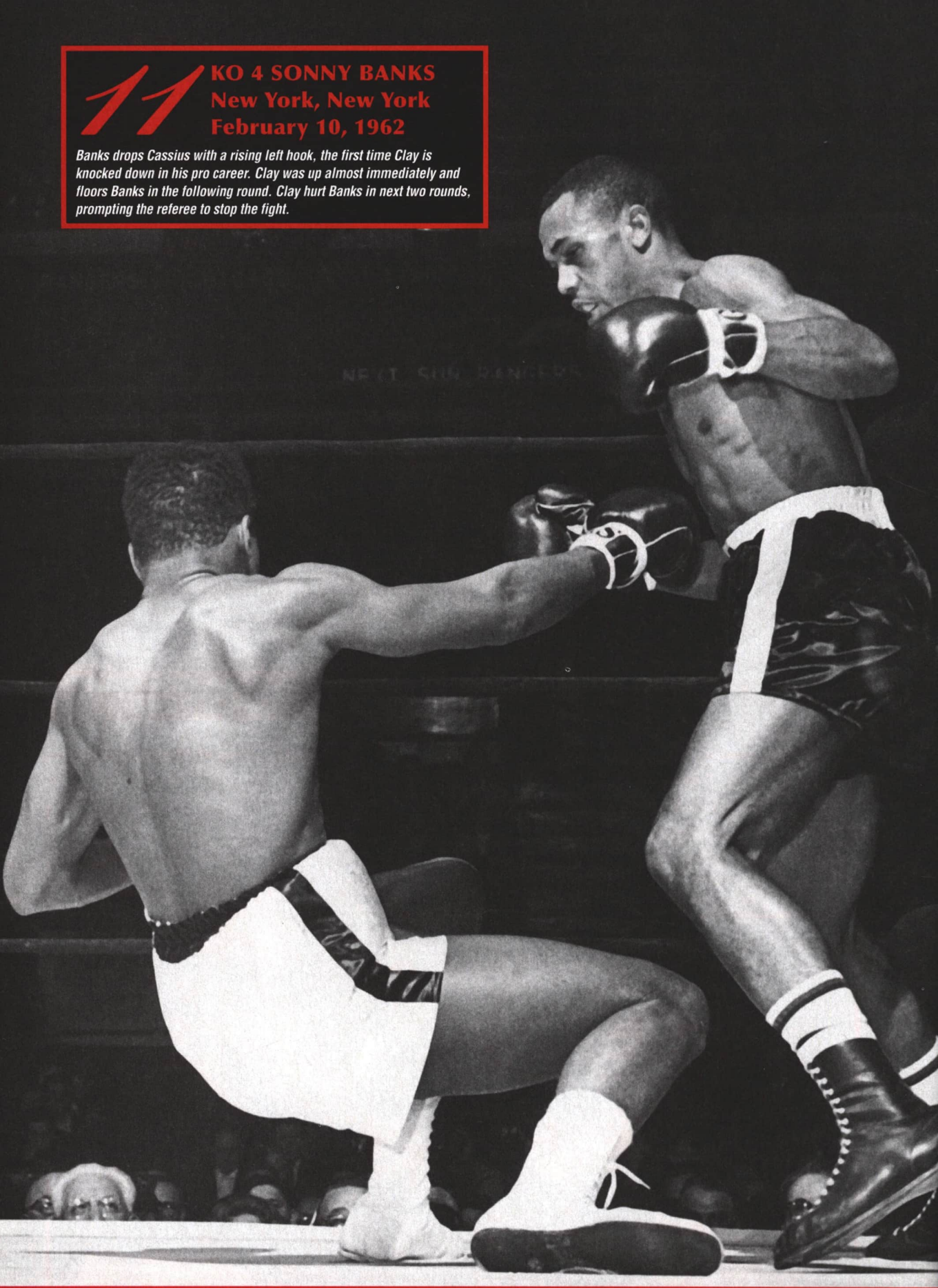
## 9 KO 6 ALEX MITEFF
## Louisville, Kentucky
## October 7, 1961

*Absorbing a punishing attack to the body, 19-year-old Clay knocks out rugged Alex Miteff with a barrage of lefts and rights, bloodying the nose of Miteff in the process. Giving away 22 pounds, Clay was not bothered by Miteff's bodypunches, although it is an even fight up until the time the referee stops the bout.*

## 10 KO 7 WILLI BESMANOFF
## Louisville, Kentucky
## November 29, 1961

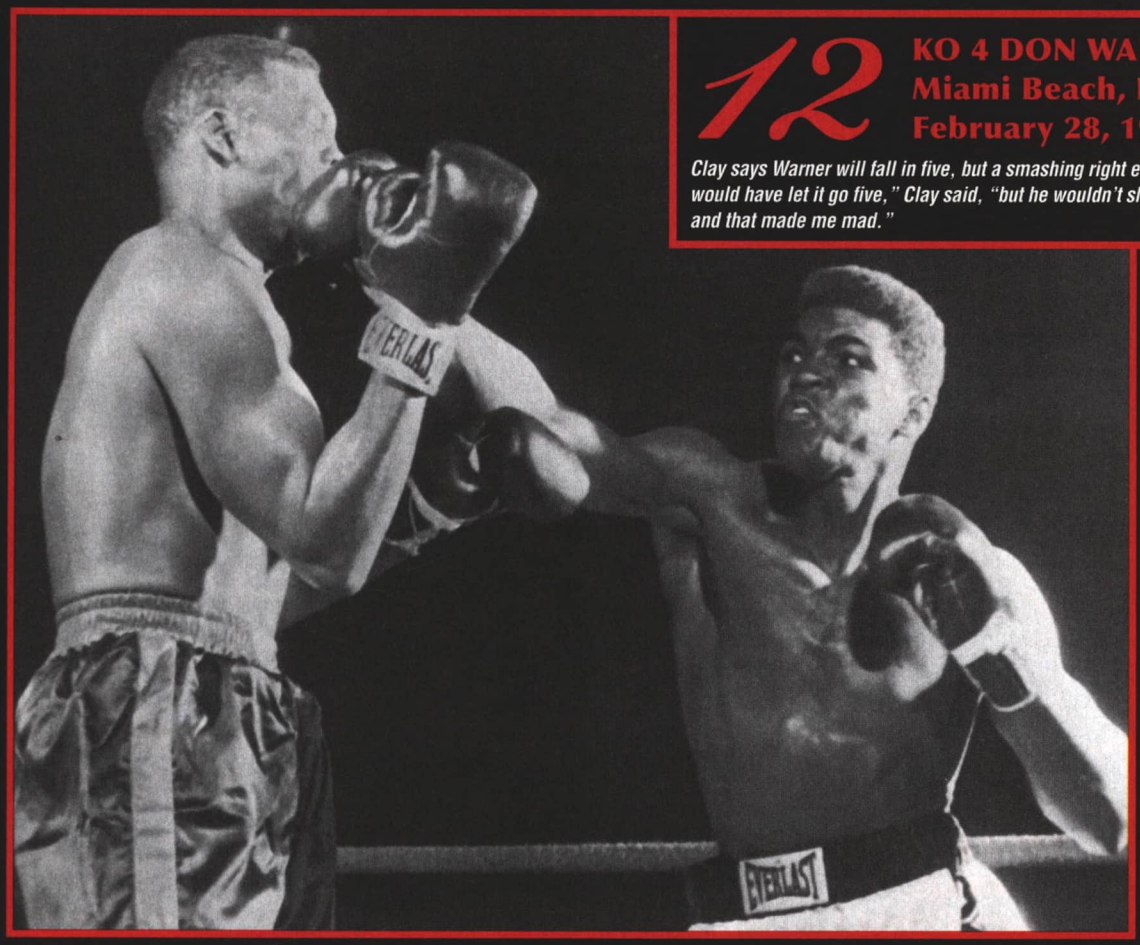
*Clay baffles Besmanoff with his speed and movement, consistently following quick jabs with powerful rights to break his opponent down. Clay puts Besmanoff on the canvas twice in the final round.*





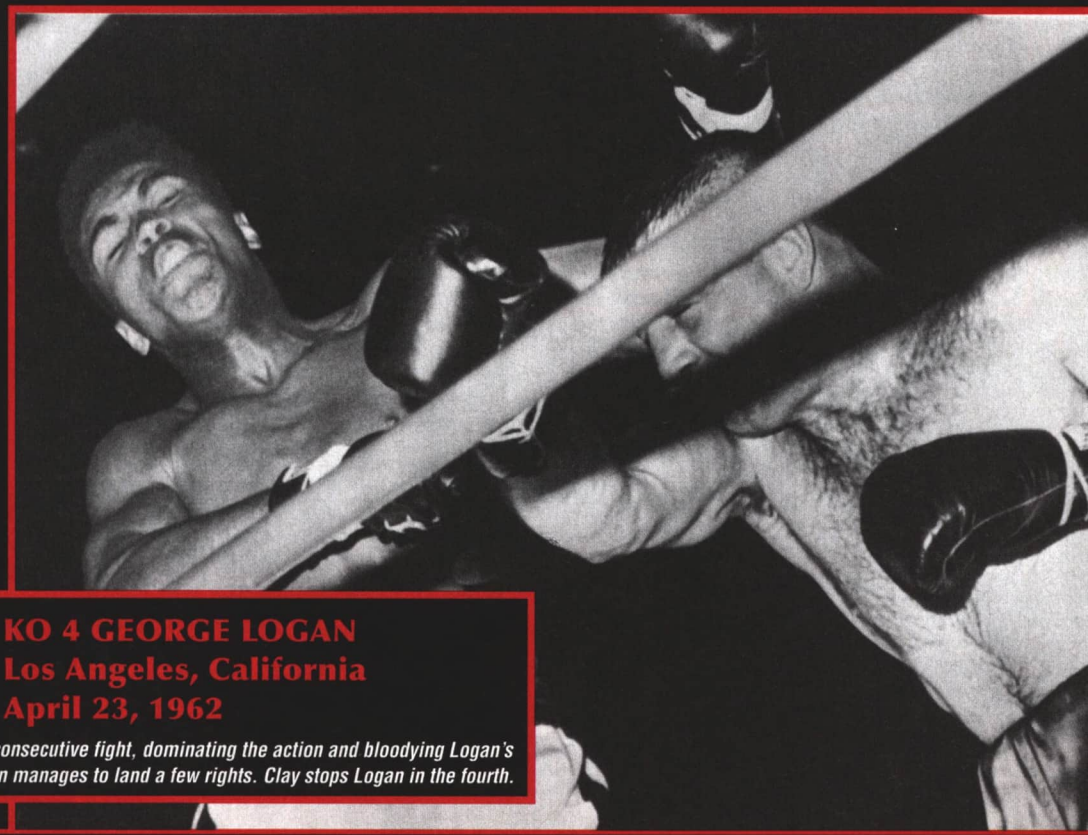
## 11 KO 4 SONNY BANKS
## New York, New York
## February 10, 1962

*Banks drops Cassius with a rising left hook, the first time Clay is knocked down in his pro career. Clay was up almost immediately and floors Banks in the following round. Clay hurt Banks in next two rounds, prompting the referee to stop the fight.*




## 12 KO 4 DON WARNER
**Miami Beach, Florida**
**February 28, 1962**

*Clay says Warner will fall in five, but a smashing right ends it in four. "I would have let it go five," Clay said, "but he wouldn't shake my hand, and that made me mad."*



## 13 KO 4 GEORGE LOGAN
**Los Angeles, California**
**April 23, 1962**

*Clay easily wins his 13th consecutive fight, dominating the action and bloodying Logan's face, but the veteran Logan manages to land a few rights. Clay stops Logan in the fourth.*

## 14 KO 7 BILLY DANIELS
## New York, New York
## May 19, 1962

*Unbeaten Clay drives a left hook into the forehead of Billy Daniels during their fight at the St. Nicholas Arena. As the bout wore on, Daniels bled profusely from a bashed-in nose, a two-inch gash on his left brow, and a cut under his right eye. And yet, when the fight was stopped in the seventh round, the 1,642 ringsiders booed lustily. They believed the 5-1 underdog, who also entered the fight as an unbeaten, should have been allowed to continue.*

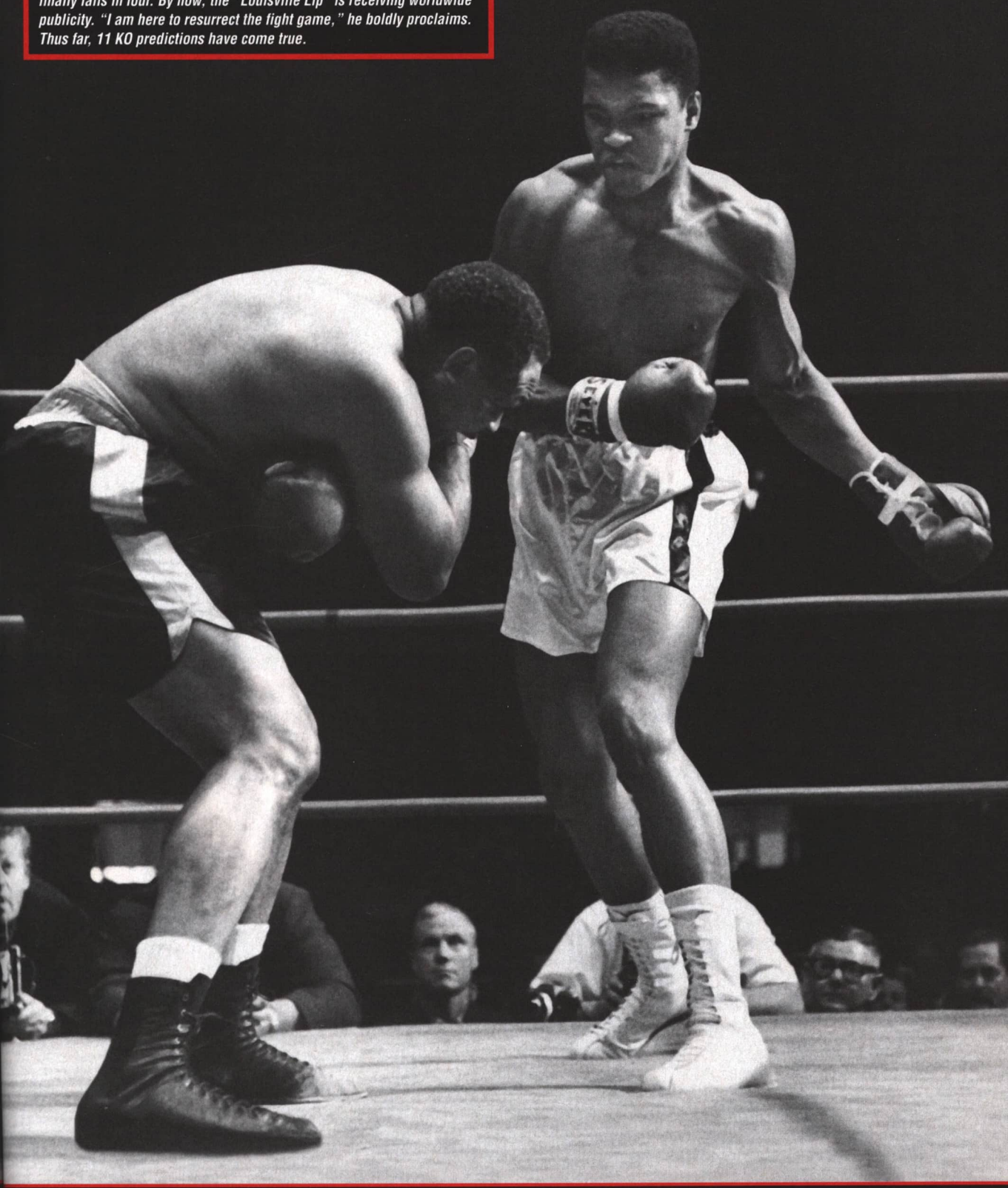
## 15 KO 5 ALEJANDRO LAVORANTE
## Los Angeles, California
## July 20, 1962

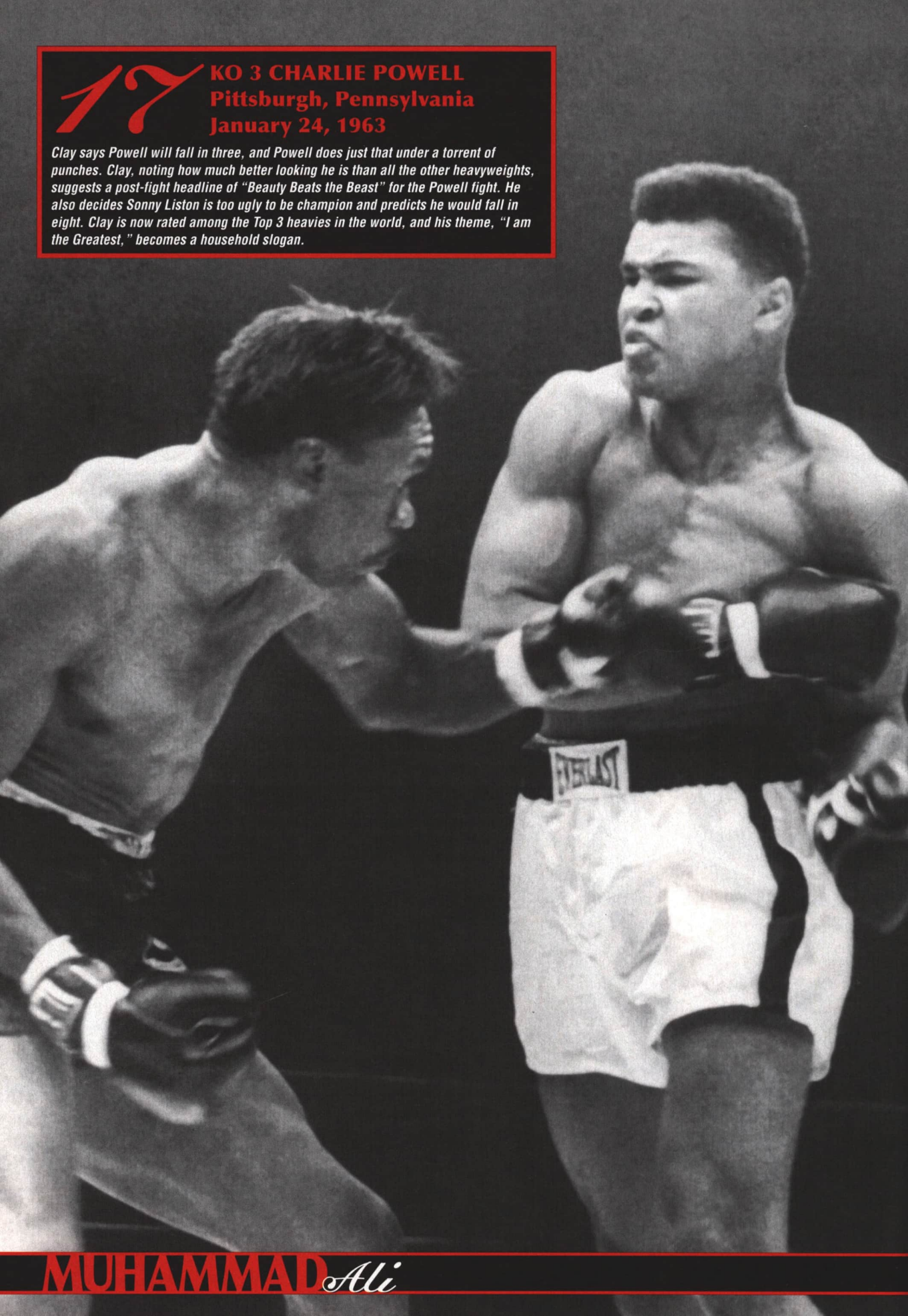
*Lavorante is badly hurt in the second round but survives to the fifth, the round in which Clay predicted he would end matters. Clay puts down Lavorante twice in the final round.*

AP PHOTO/HAROLD P. MATOSIAN

## 16 KO 4 ARCHIE MOORE
## Los Angeles, California
## November 15, 1962

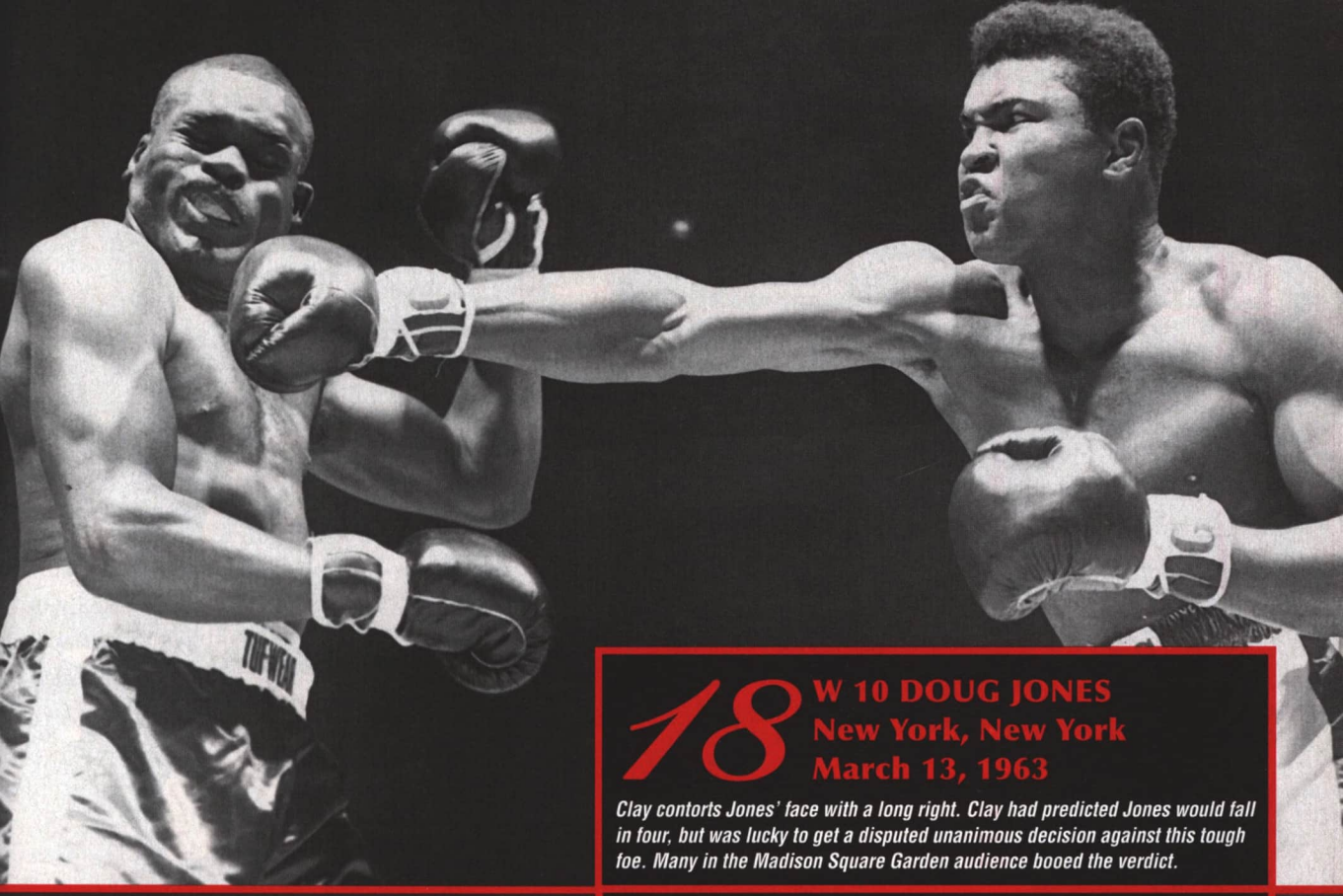
*"Moore will fall in four," Clay predicts. The "Old Mongoose" tries to withstand Clay's punches, but after being knocked down three times, he finally falls in four. By now, the "Louisville Lip" is receiving worldwide publicity. "I am here to resurrect the fight game," he boldly proclaims. Thus far, 11 KO predictions have come true.*





## 17 KO 3 CHARLIE POWELL
**Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**
**January 24, 1963**

*Clay says Powell will fall in three, and Powell does just that under a torrent of punches. Clay, noting how much better looking he is than all the other heavyweights, suggests a post-fight headline of "Beauty Beats the Beast" for the Powell fight. He also decides Sonny Liston is too ugly to be champion and predicts he would fall in eight. Clay is now rated among the Top 3 heavies in the world, and his theme, "I am the Greatest," becomes a household slogan.*



## 18 W 10 DOUG JONES
## New York, New York
## March 13, 1963

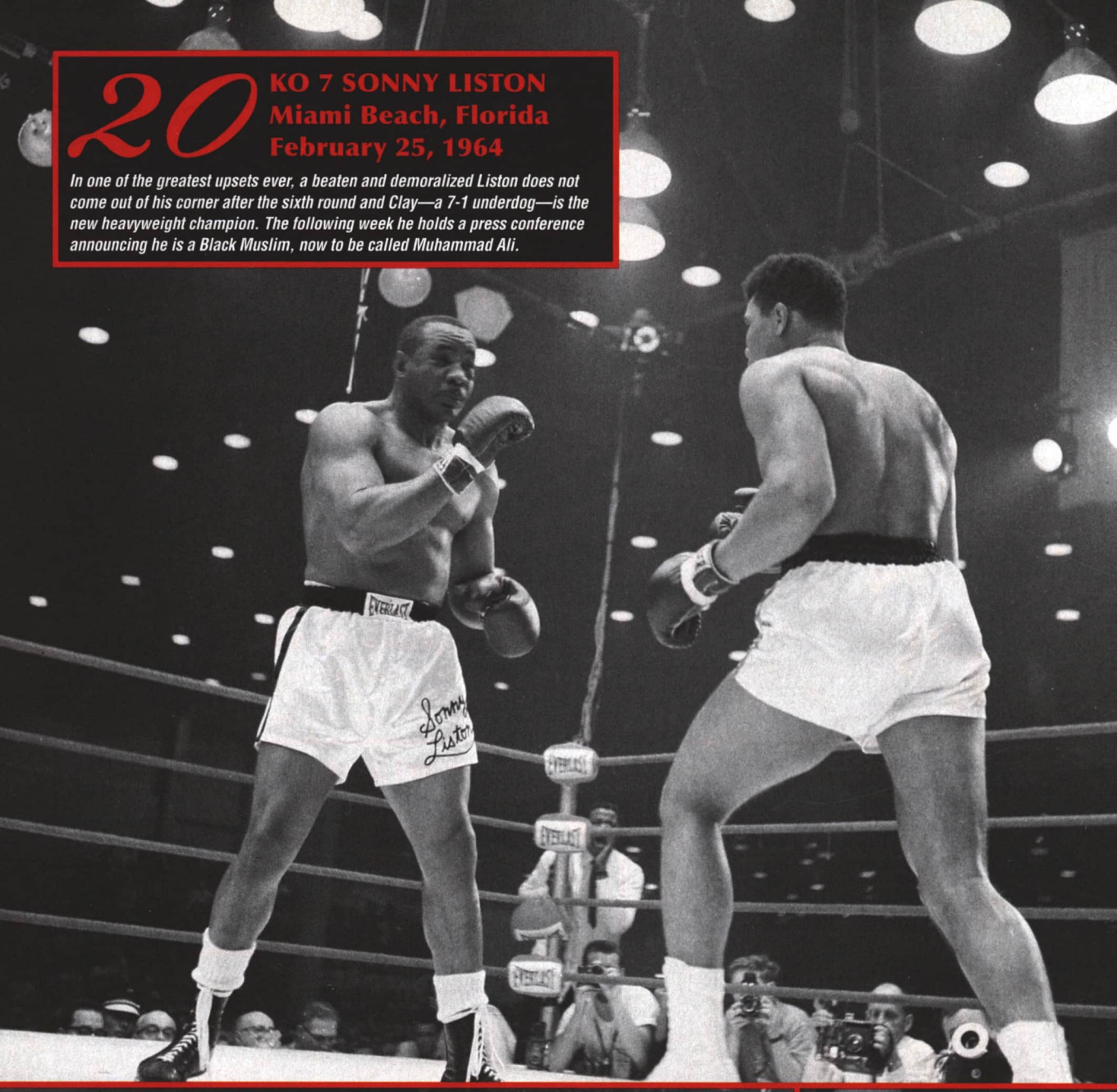
*Clay contorts Jones' face with a long right. Clay had predicted Jones would fall in four, but was lucky to get a disputed unanimous decision against this tough foe. Many in the Madison Square Garden audience booed the verdict.*

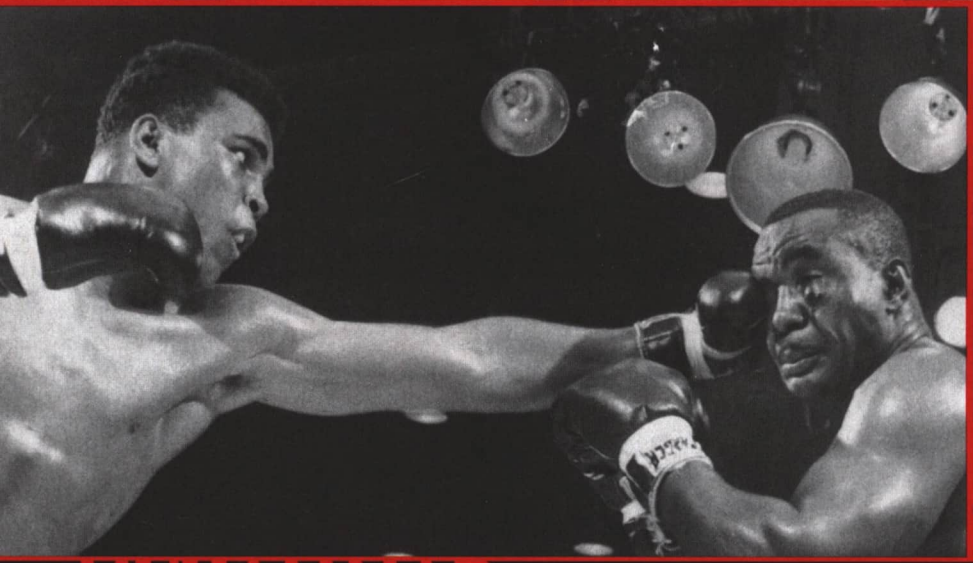
## 19 KO 5 HENRY COOPER
## London, England
## June 18, 1963

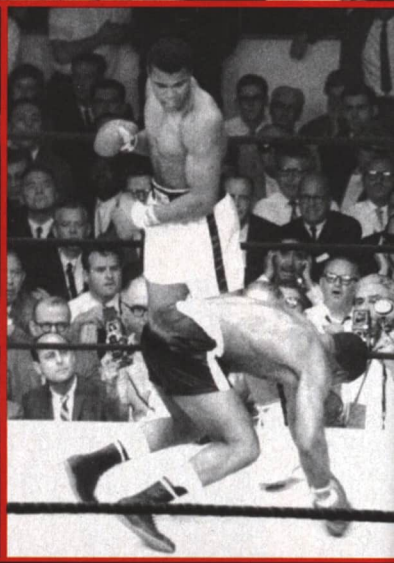
*A blood-smeared Cooper tears into Clay, hoping to capitalized on the brutal knockdown he scored in the fourth round. But unfortunately for the Englishman, his cuts are too bad for him to continue. Afterward, Clay admits he was hurt and calls Cooper "brave and tough."*

# 20 KO 7 SONNY LISTON
## Miami Beach, Florida
## February 25, 1964

*In one of the greatest upsets ever, a beaten and demoralized Liston does not come out of his corner after the sixth round and Clay—a 7-1 underdog—is the new heavyweight champion. The following week he holds a press conference announcing he is a Black Muslim, now to be called Muhammad Ali.*

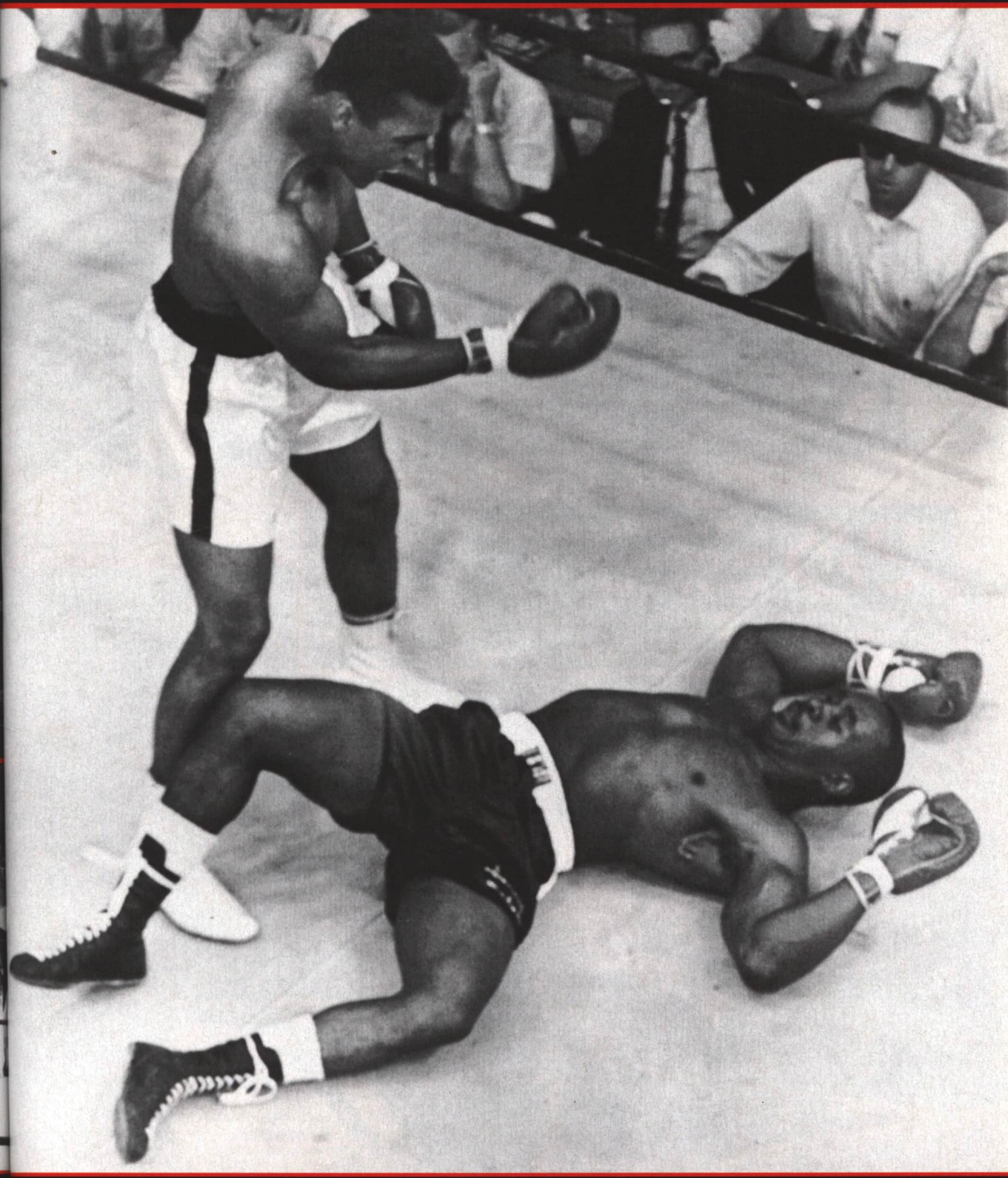




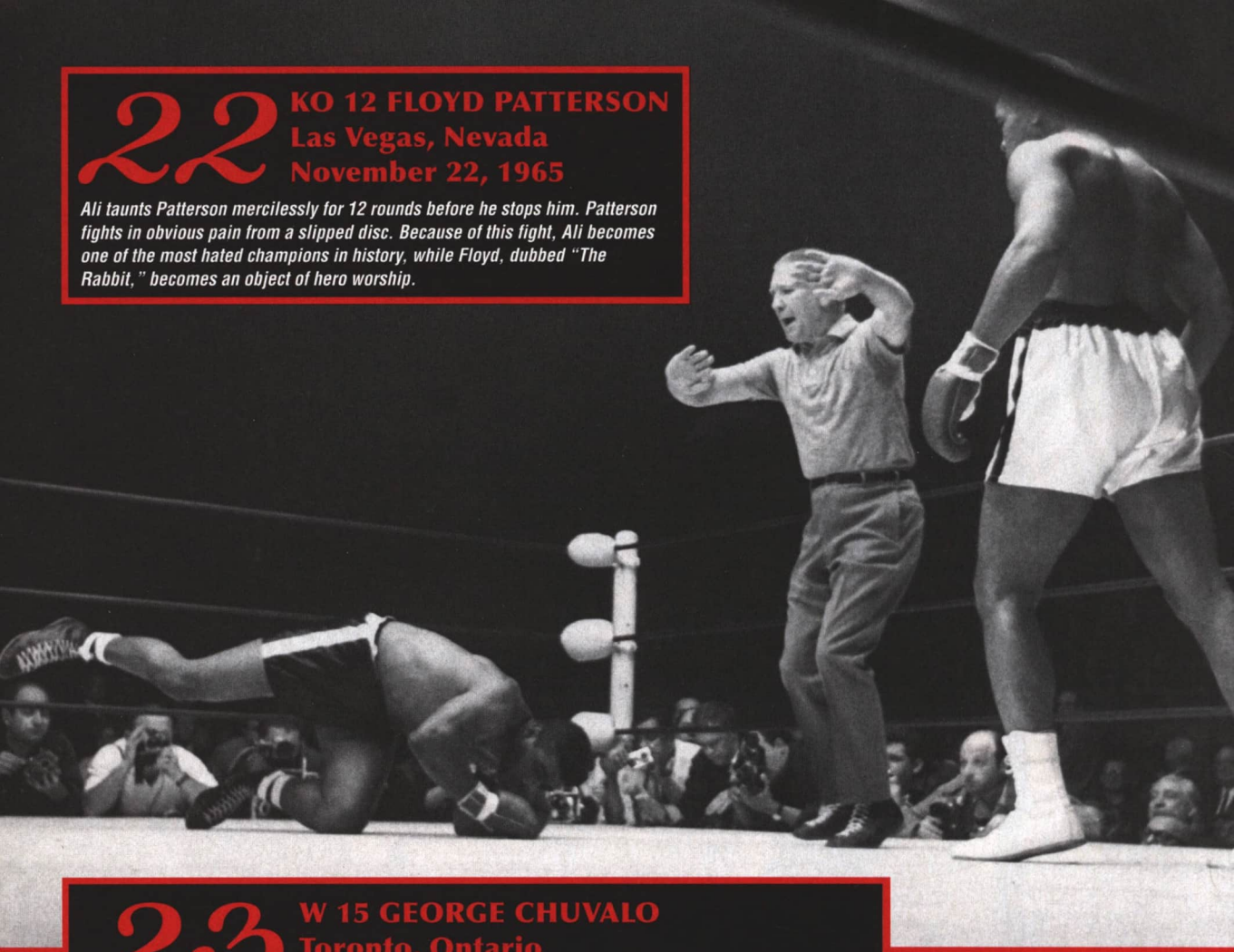
# 21 KO 1 SONNY LISTON
## Lewiston, Maine
## May 25, 1965

*"Fake! Fake!" That's what the crowd roars as Ali stands over the former champion after knocking him out in a little over a minute of the first round. Very few fans see the punch that KO'd Liston, and Ali claims it is his mysterious "anchor punch," taught to him by Stepin Fetchit. Liston is castigated in the press while Muhammad makes plans to fight Floyd Patterson.*



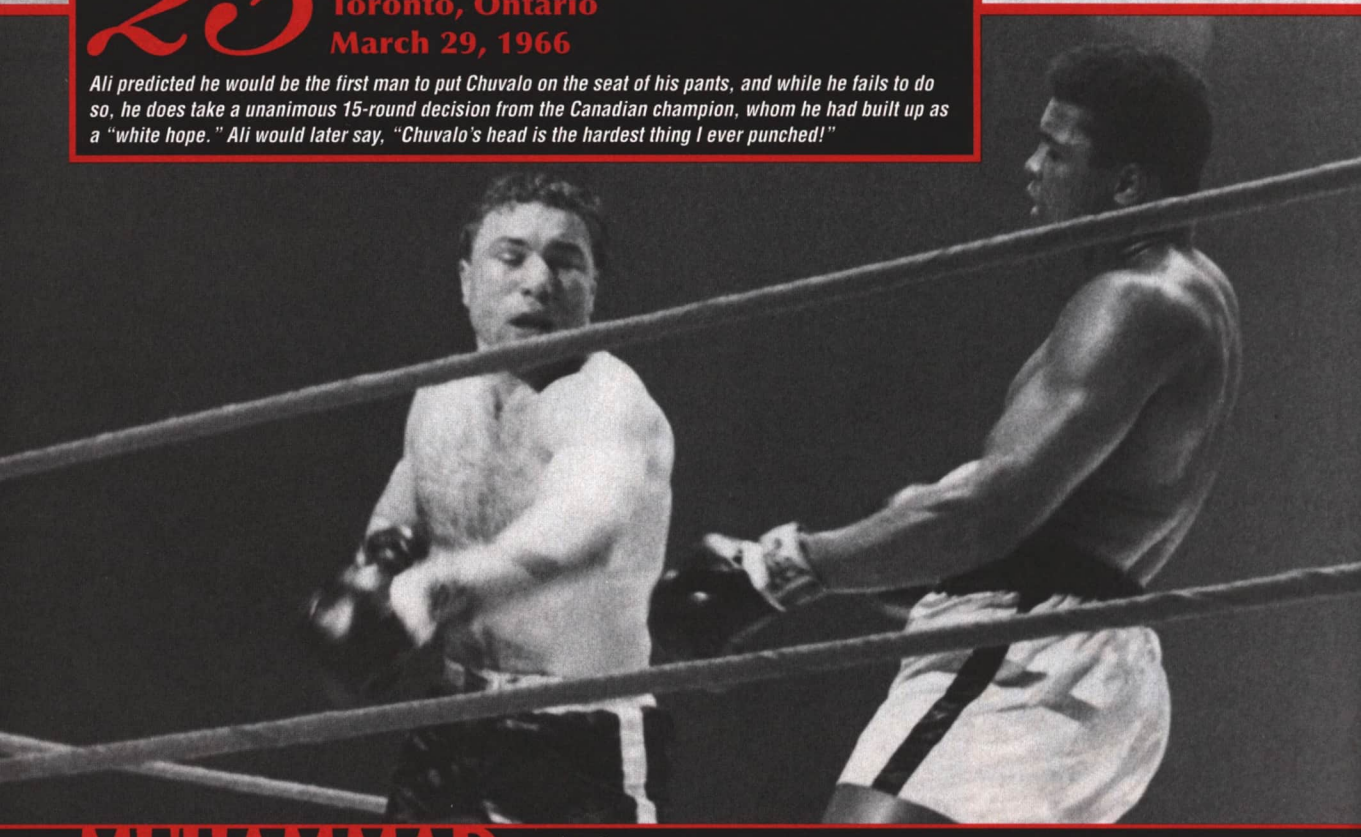
## 22 KO 12 FLOYD PATTERSON
**Las Vegas, Nevada**
**November 22, 1965**

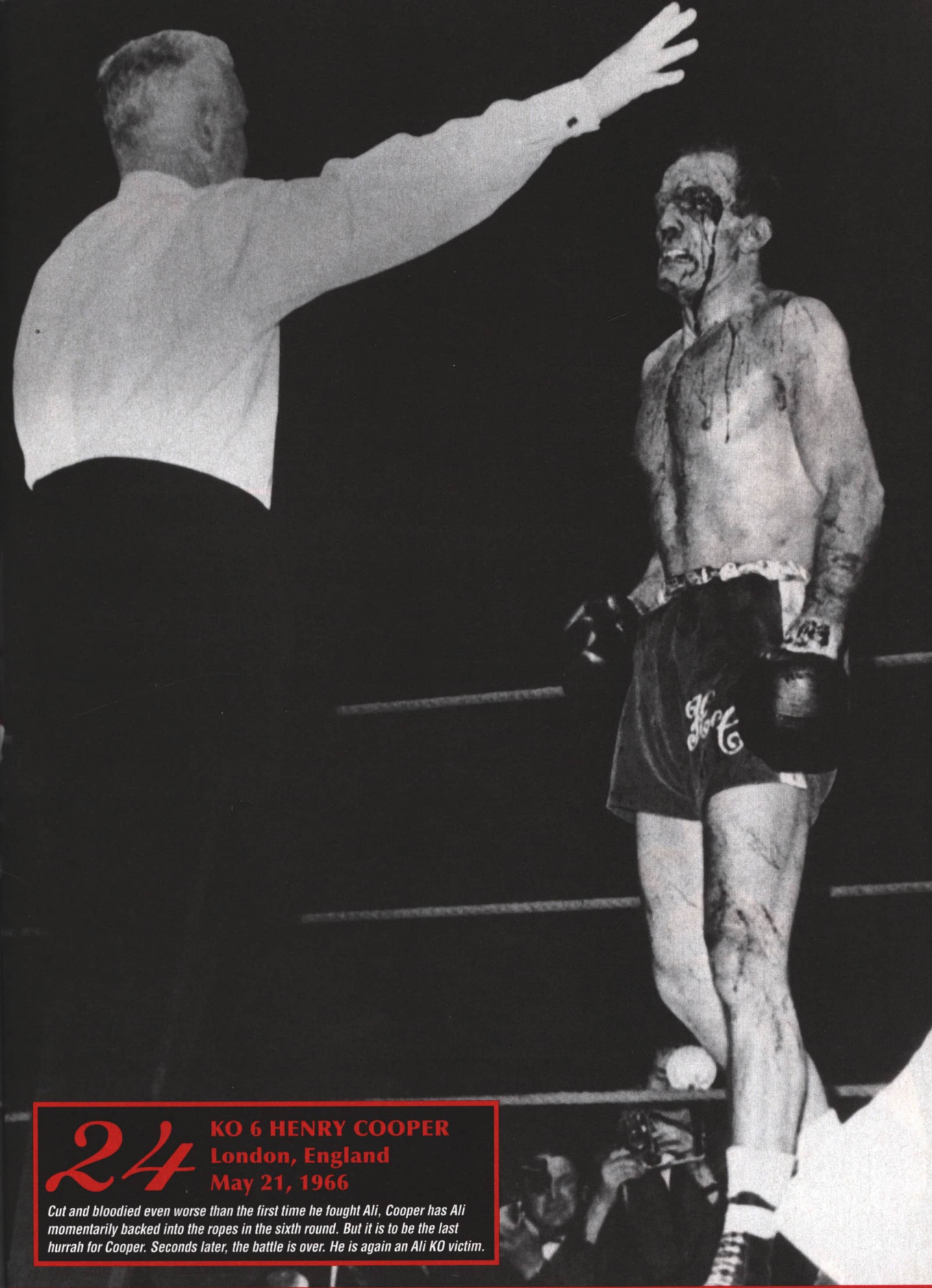
*Ali taunts Patterson mercilessly for 12 rounds before he stops him. Patterson fights in obvious pain from a slipped disc. Because of this fight, Ali becomes one of the most hated champions in history, while Floyd, dubbed "The Rabbit," becomes an object of hero worship.*



## 23 W 15 GEORGE CHUVALO
**Toronto, Ontario**
**March 29, 1966**

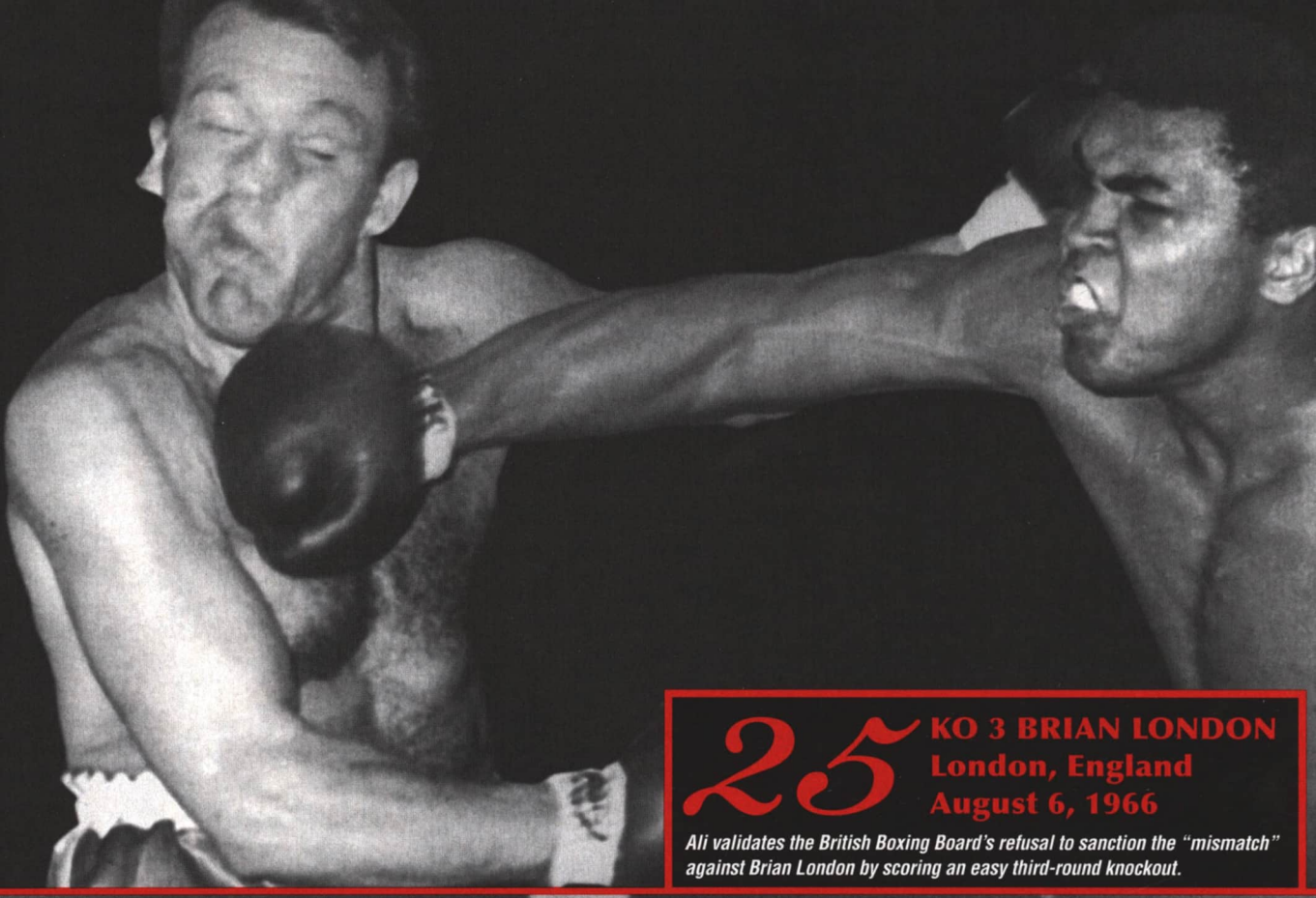
*Ali predicted he would be the first man to put Chuvalo on the seat of his pants, and while he fails to do so, he does take a unanimous 15-round decision from the Canadian champion, whom he had built up as a "white hope." Ali would later say, "Chuvalo's head is the hardest thing I ever punched!"*





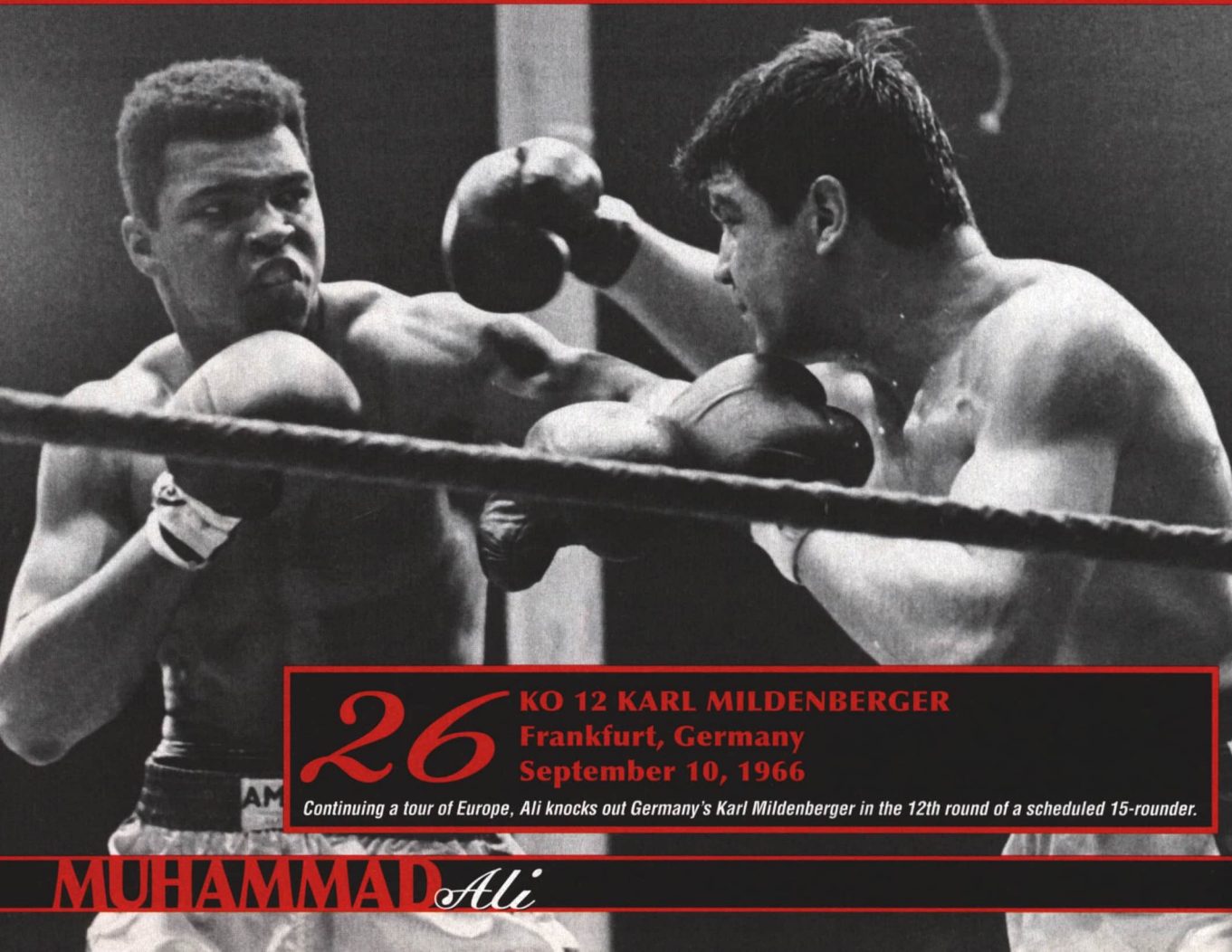
## 24 KO 6 HENRY COOPER
## London, England
## May 21, 1966

*Cut and bloodied even worse than the first time he fought Ali, Cooper has Ali momentarily backed into the ropes in the sixth round. But it is to be the last hurrah for Cooper. Seconds later, the battle is over. He is again an Ali KO victim.*



## 25 KO 3 BRIAN LONDON
**London, England**
**August 6, 1966**

*Ali validates the British Boxing Board's refusal to sanction the "mismatch" against Brian London by scoring an easy third-round knockout.*

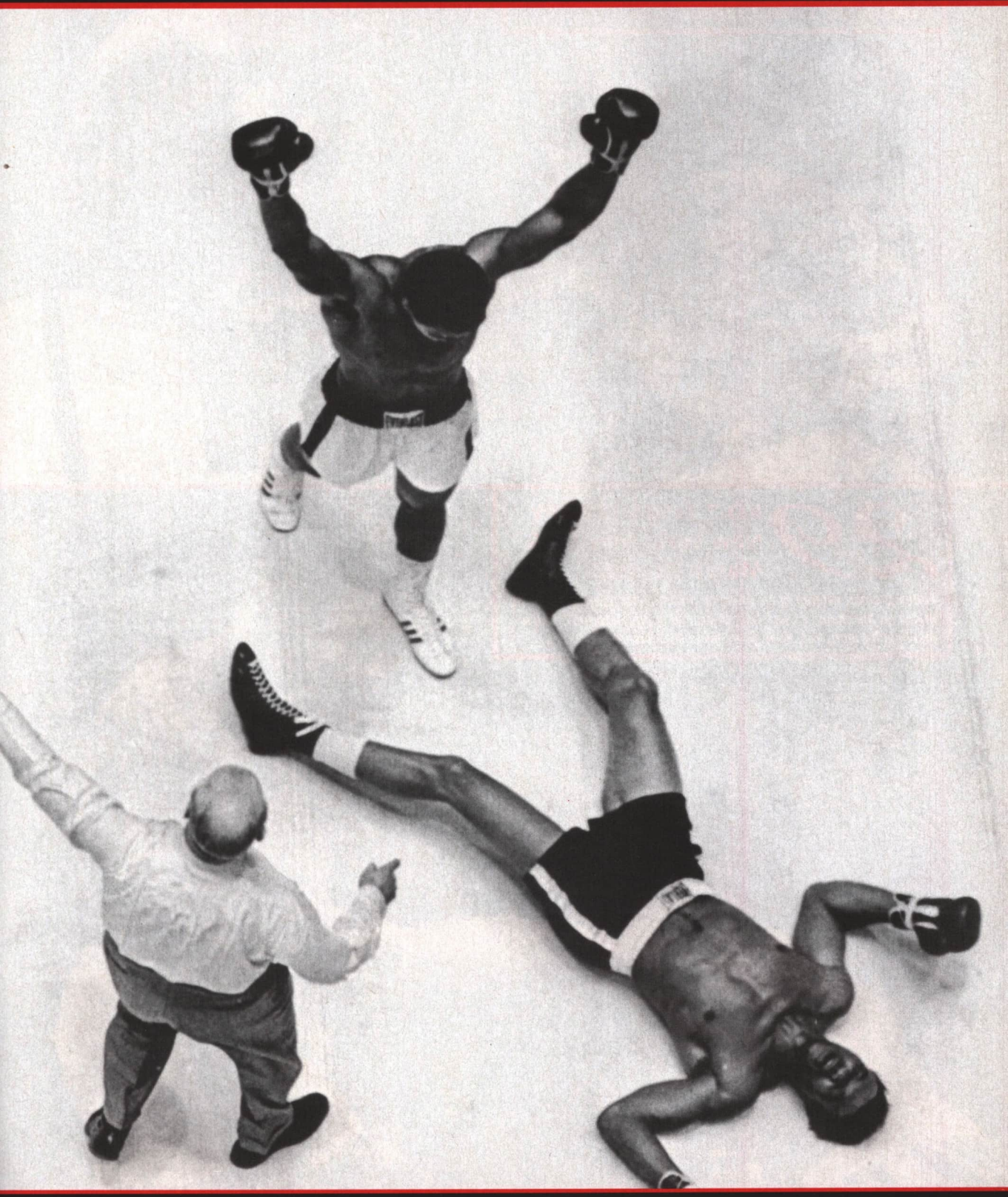


## 26 KO 12 KARL MILDENBERGER
**Frankfurt, Germany**
**September 10, 1966**

*Continuing a tour of Europe, Ali knocks out Germany's Karl Mildenberger in the 12th round of a scheduled 15-rounder.*

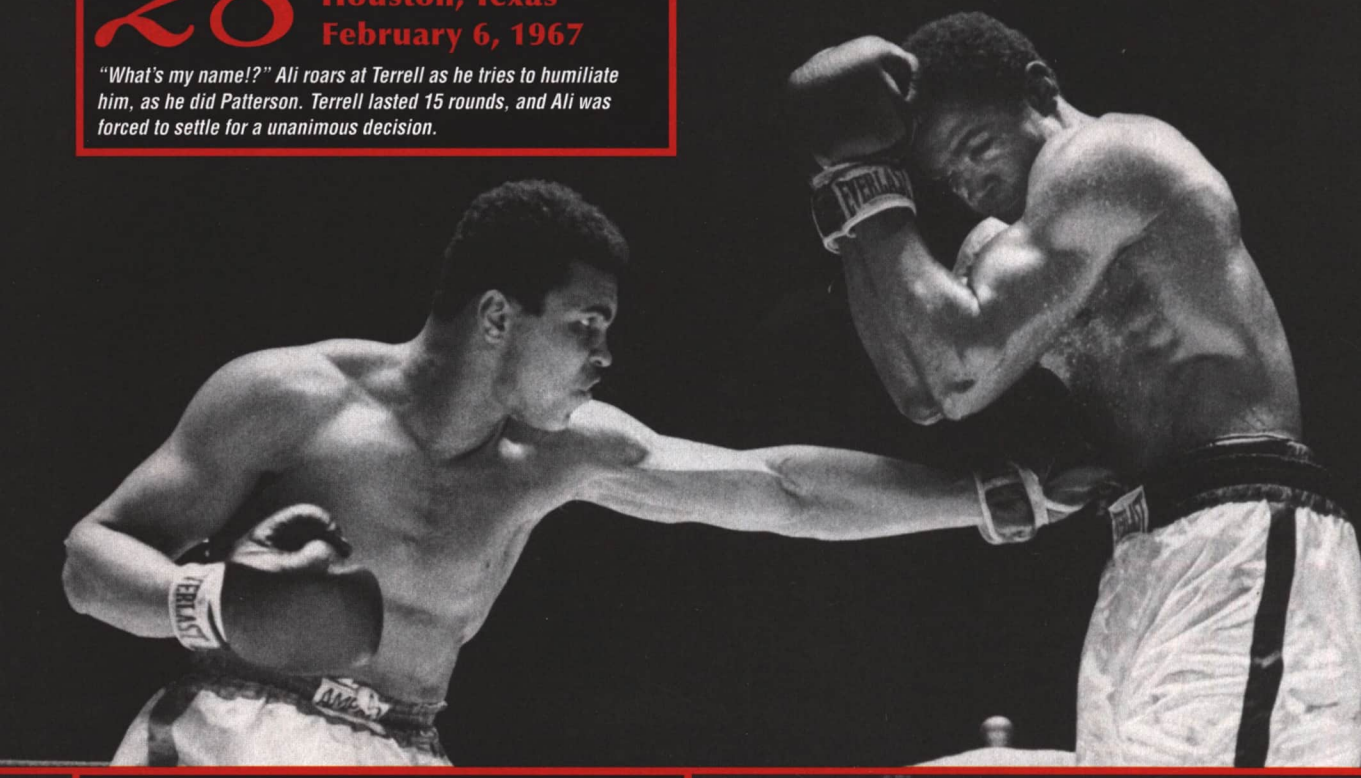
# 27 KO 3 CLEVELAND WILLIAMS
## Houston, Texas
## November 14, 1966

*Williams goes down in the third round from a savage combination of punches. Ali does not clown around in this fight and dispatches Williams easily and brutally. "Maybe now," Ali says, "they'll admit I'm a good fighter."*



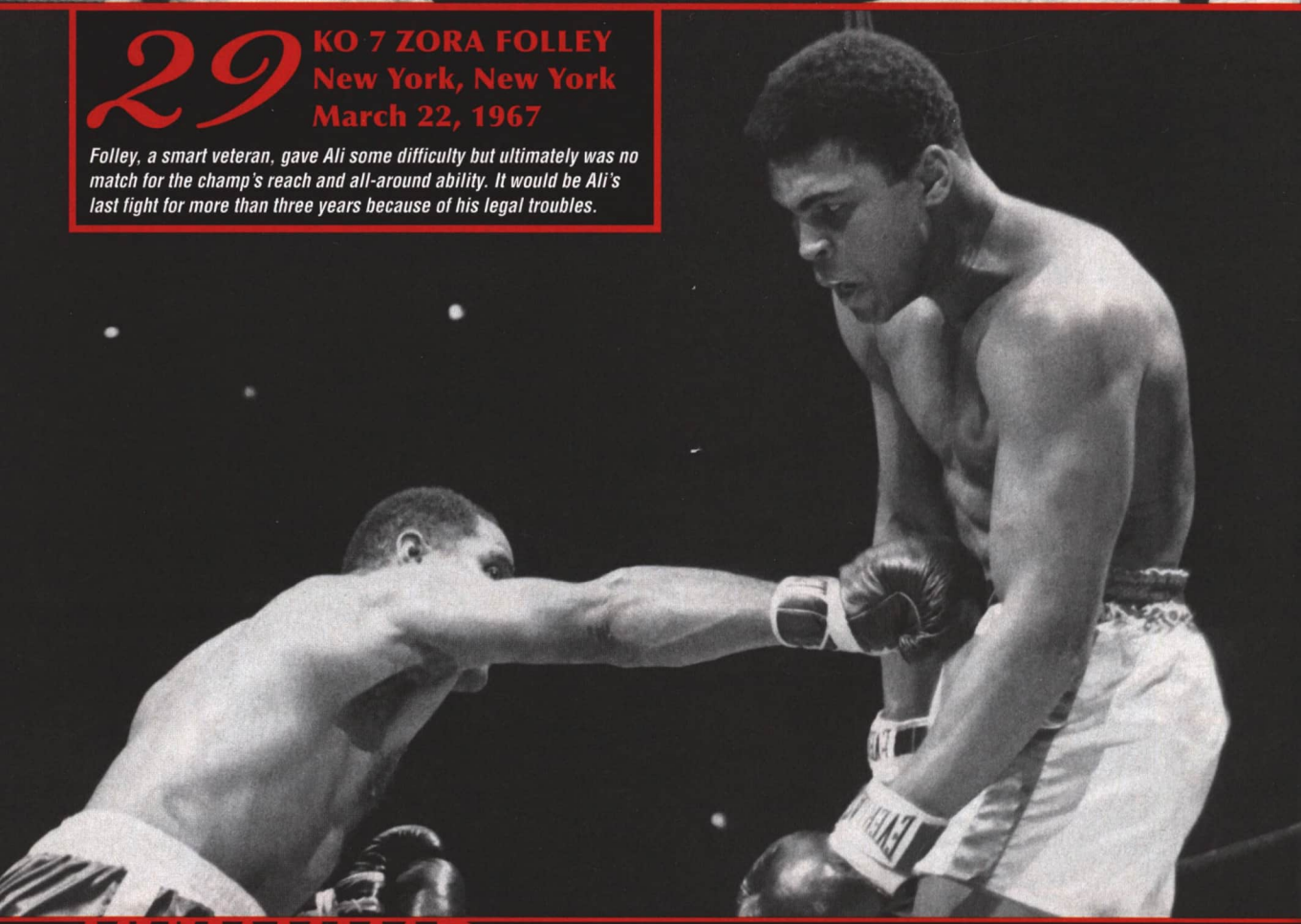
## 28 W 15 ERNIE TERRELL
**Houston, Texas**
**February 6, 1967**

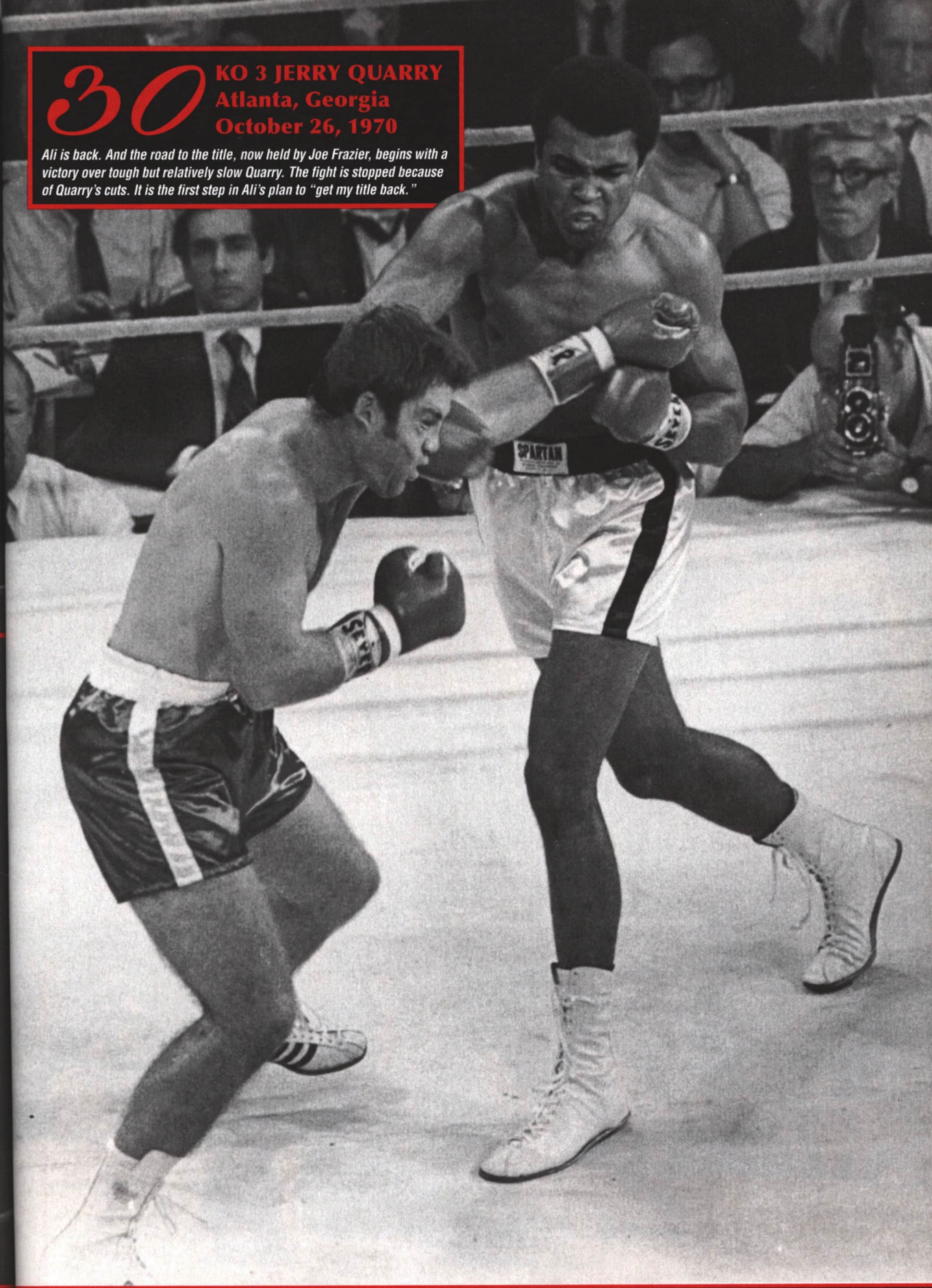
*"What's my name!?" Ali roars at Terrell as he tries to humiliate him, as he did Patterson. Terrell lasted 15 rounds, and Ali was forced to settle for a unanimous decision.*



## 29 KO 7 ZORA FOLLEY
**New York, New York**
**March 22, 1967**

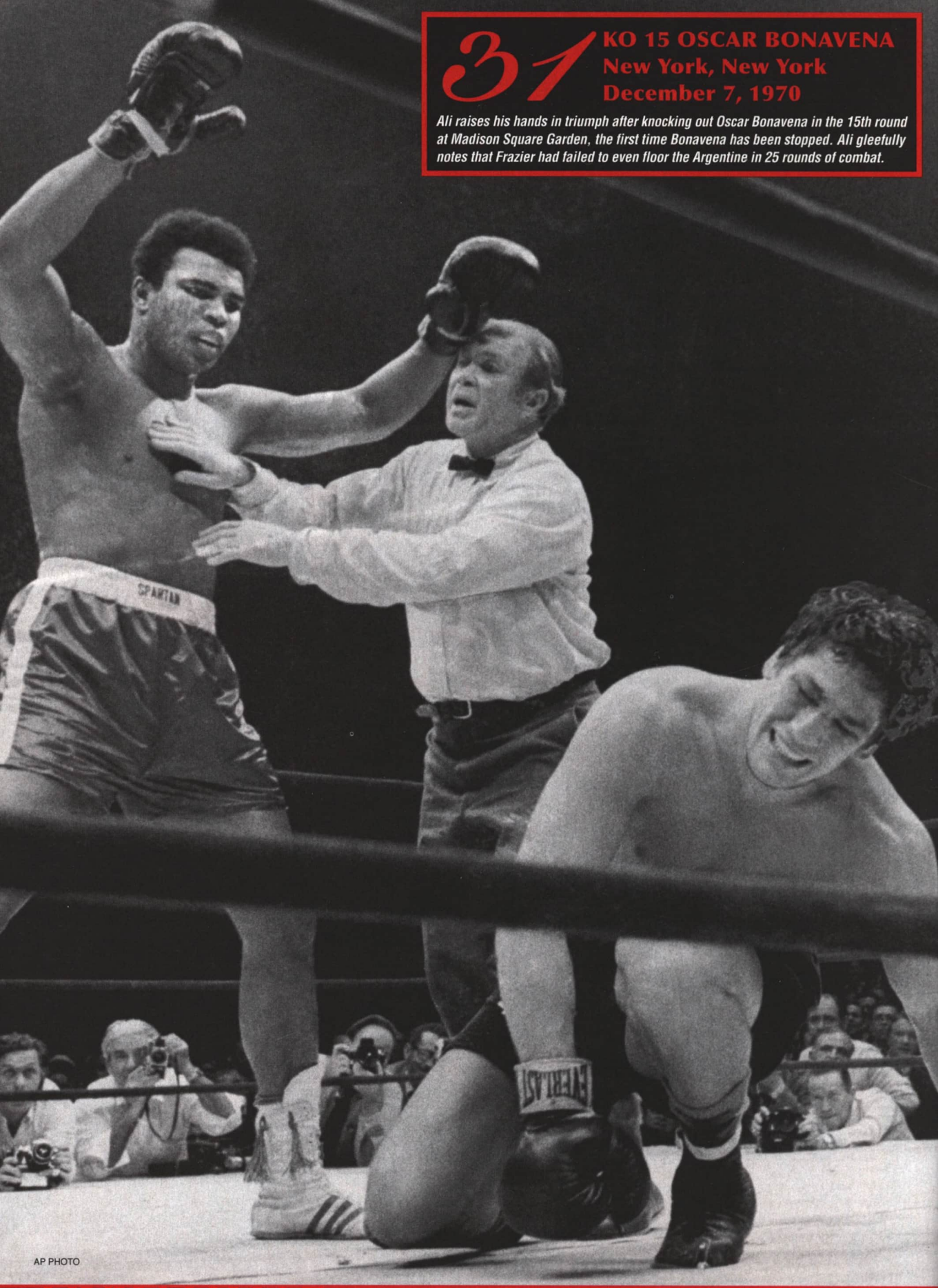
*Folley, a smart veteran, gave Ali some difficulty but ultimately was no match for the champ's reach and all-around ability. It would be Ali's last fight for more than three years because of his legal troubles.*






## 30 KO 3 JERRY QUARRY
**Atlanta, Georgia**
**October 26, 1970**

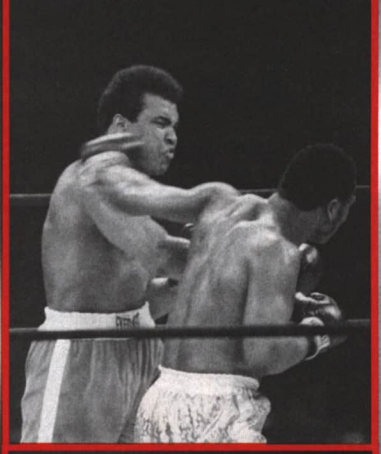
*Ali is back. And the road to the title, now held by Joe Frazier, begins with a victory over tough but relatively slow Quarry. The fight is stopped because of Quarry's cuts. It is the first step in Ali's plan to "get my title back."*

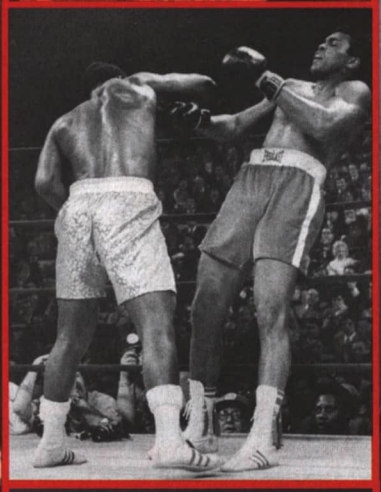


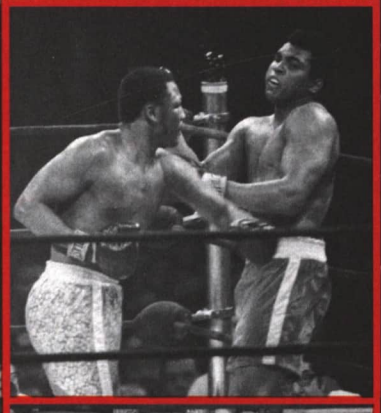
# 31 KO 15 OSCAR BONAVENA
## New York, New York
## December 7, 1970

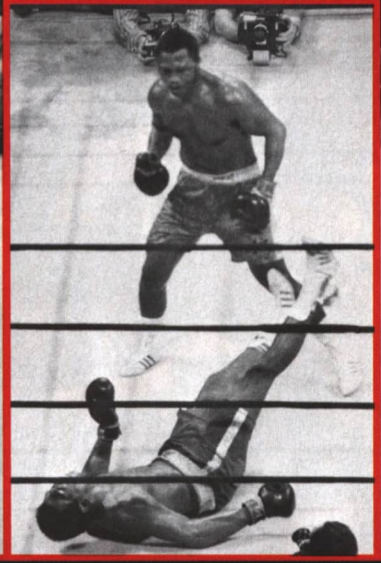
*Ali raises his hands in triumph after knocking out Oscar Bonavena in the 15th round at Madison Square Garden, the first time Bonavena has been stopped. Ali gleefully notes that Frazier had failed to even floor the Argentine in 25 rounds of combat.*

AP PHOTO









# 32 L 15 JOE FRAZIER
## New York, New York
## March 8, 1971

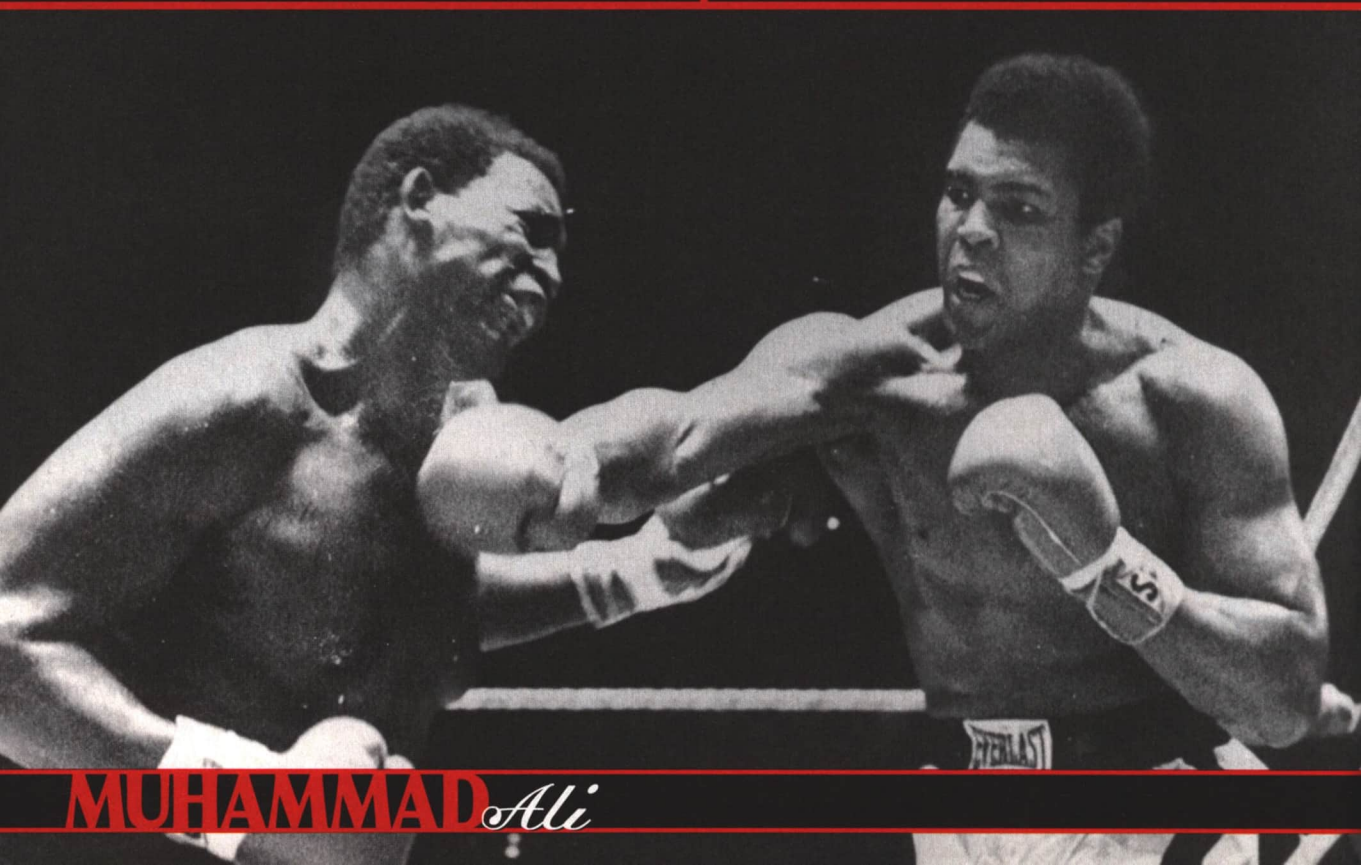
*The first of three fights between Frazier and Ali takes place at Madison Square Garden. Both men fight well in a classic confrontation that captures the imagination of the world, but the left hook that floors Ali in the 15th round cements the decision in favor of the defending world champion.*

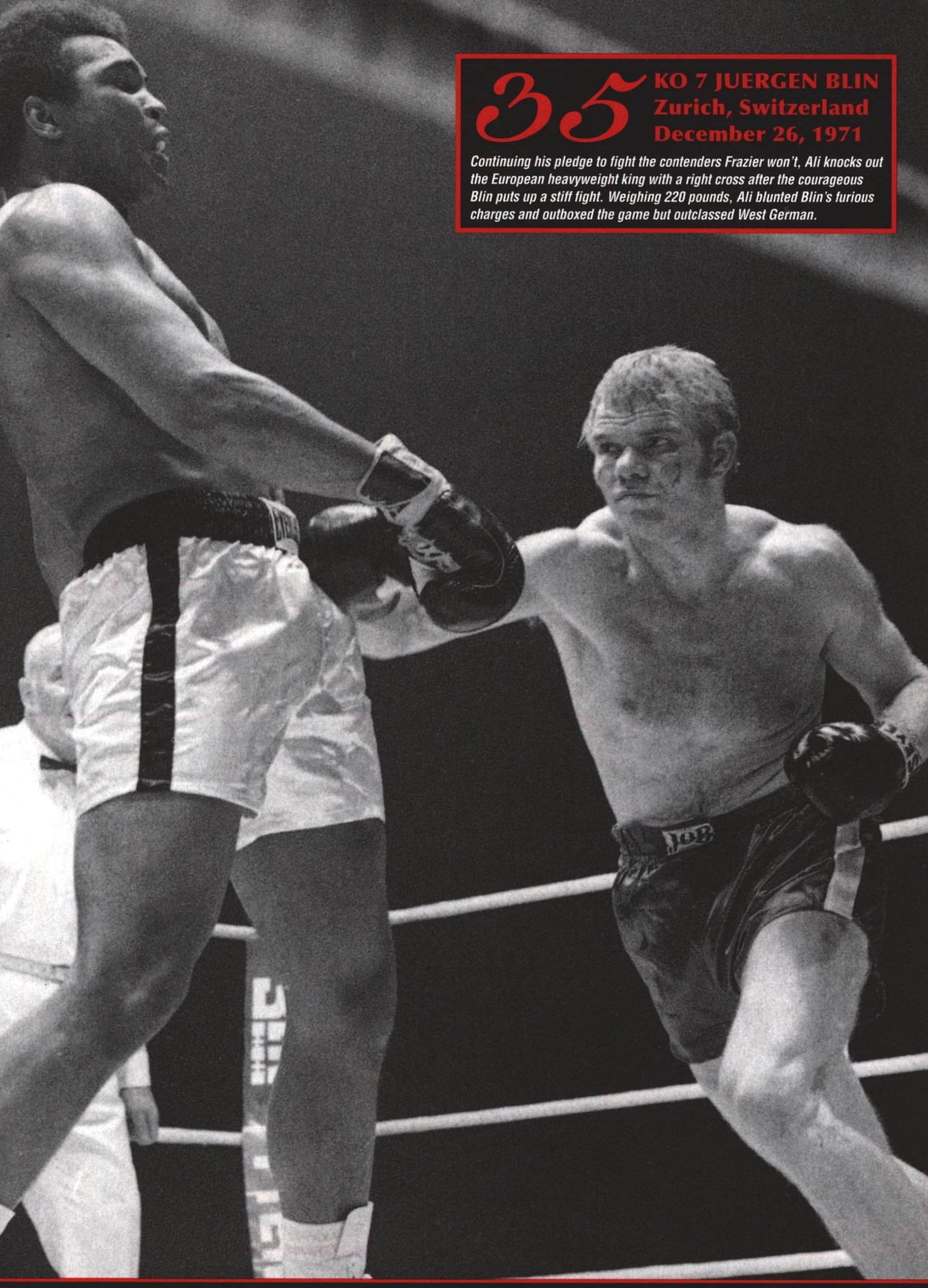
## 33 KO 12 JIMMY ELLIS
**Houston, Texas**
**July 26, 1971**

*Ali snaps out a jab in the direction of former sparring partner Ellis, his first opponent following his loss to Frazier. Although Ali claims his foe is "better than Frazier," Ellis, who had fought much of his career as a middleweight, is stopped in the 12th round.*

## 34 W 12 BUSTER MATHIS
**Houston, Texas**
**November 17, 1971**

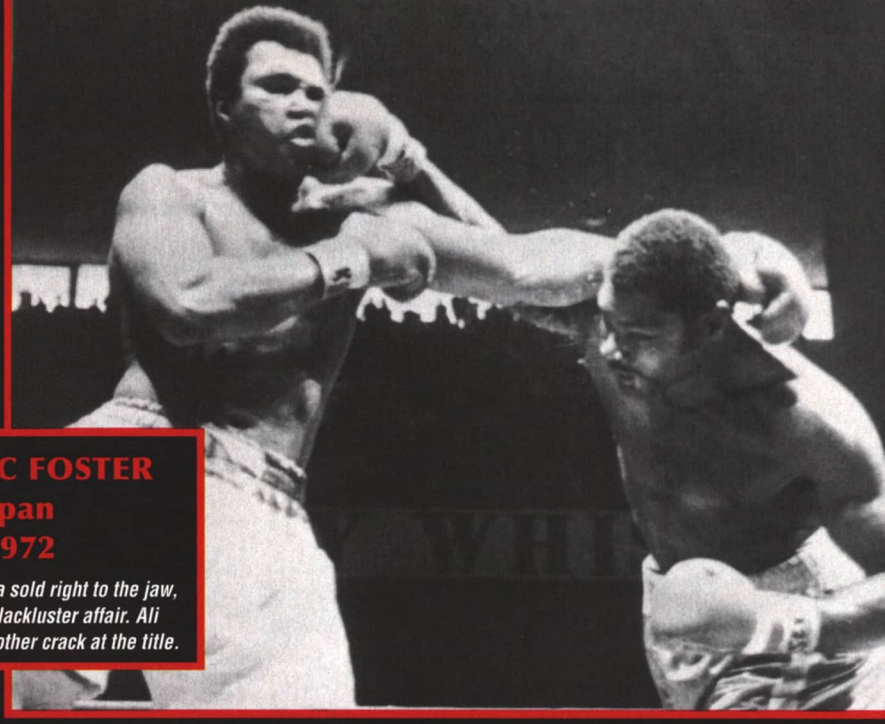
*Buster Mathis absorbs a right hand from Ali during their North American Boxing Federation heavyweight title fight, which Ali wins via 12-round decision. The fact Frazier had knocked out Mathis in 1968 takes some of the luster off the victory.*





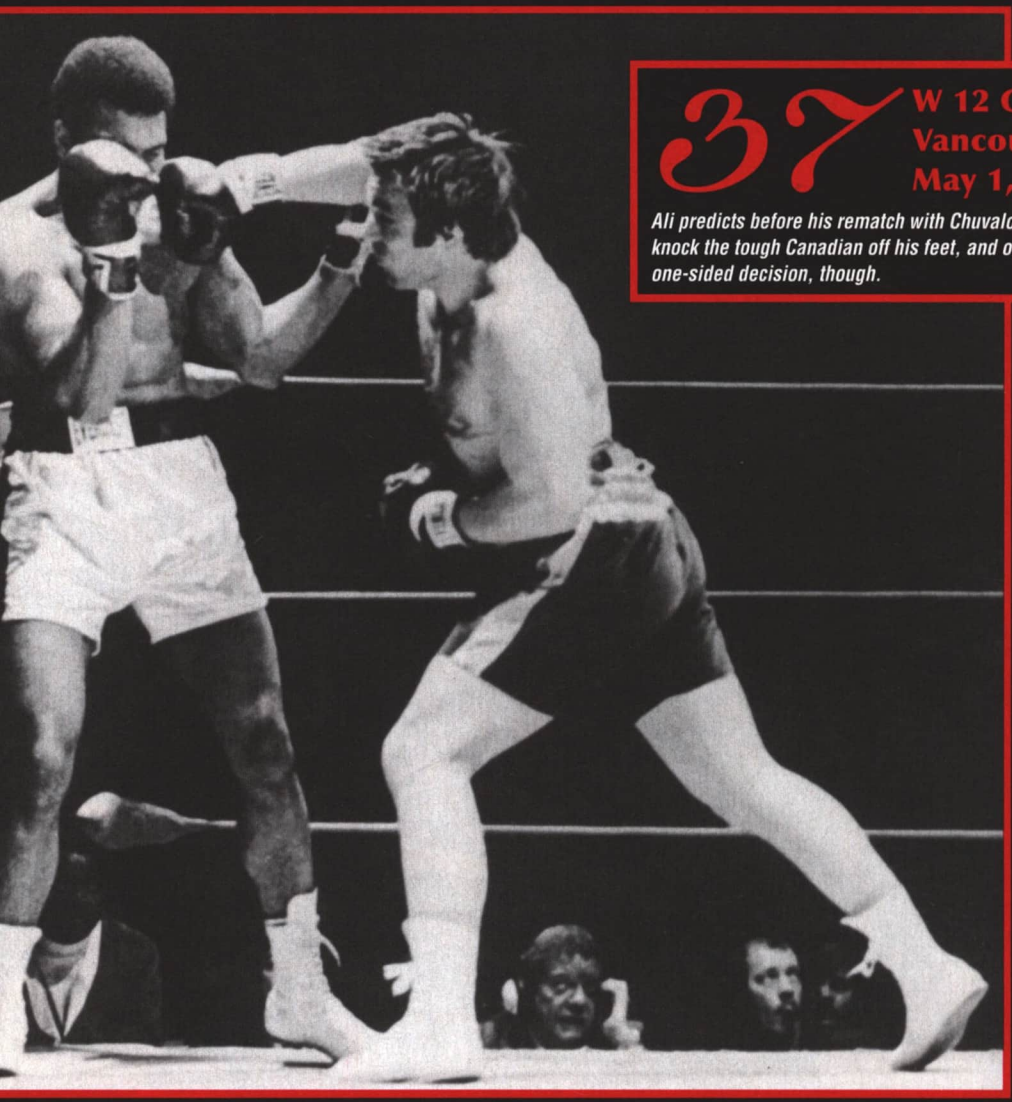
## 35 KO 7 JUERGEN BLIN
## Zurich, Switzerland
## December 26, 1971

*Continuing his pledge to fight the contenders Frazier won't, Ali knocks out the European heavyweight king with a right cross after the courageous Blin puts up a stiff fight. Weighing 220 pounds, Ali blunted Blin's furious charges and outboxed the game but outclassed West German.*



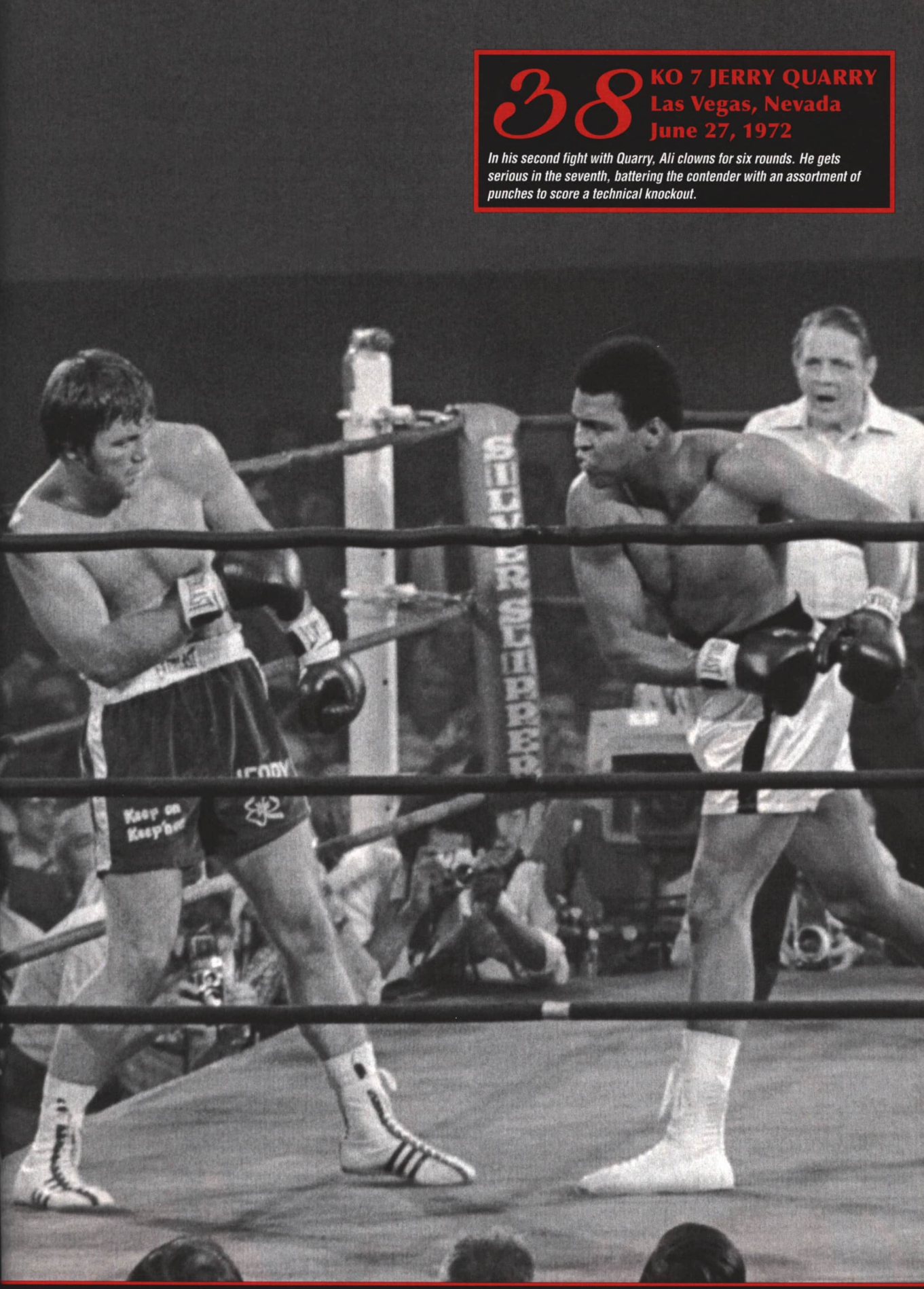
## 36 W 15 MAC FOSTER
**Tokyo, Japan**
**April 1, 1972**

*Mac Foster comes over the top of Ali's jab with a sold right to the jaw, but it is one of the few highlights of a generally lackluster affair. Ali wins a 15-round decision to stay on track for another crack at the title.*



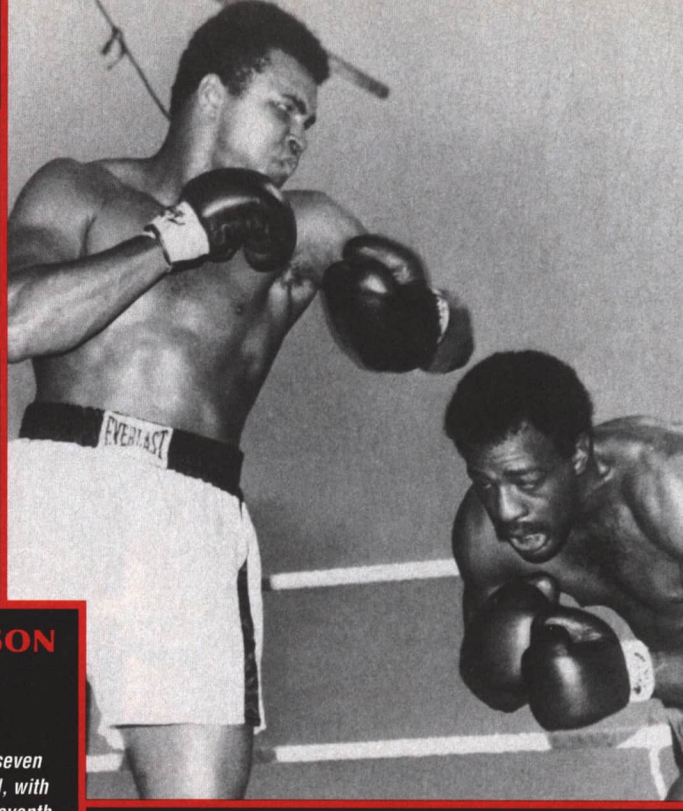
## 37 W 12 GEORGE CHUVALO
**Vancouver, Canada**
**May 1, 1972**

*Ali predicts before his rematch with Chuvalo that he would become the first to knock the tough Canadian off his feet, and once again he can't do it. Ali wins a one-sided decision, though.*


38
KO 7 JERRY QUARRY
Las Vegas, Nevada
June 27, 1972
In his second fight with Quarry, Ali clowns for six rounds. He gets serious in the seventh, battering the contender with an assortment of punches to score a technical knockout.

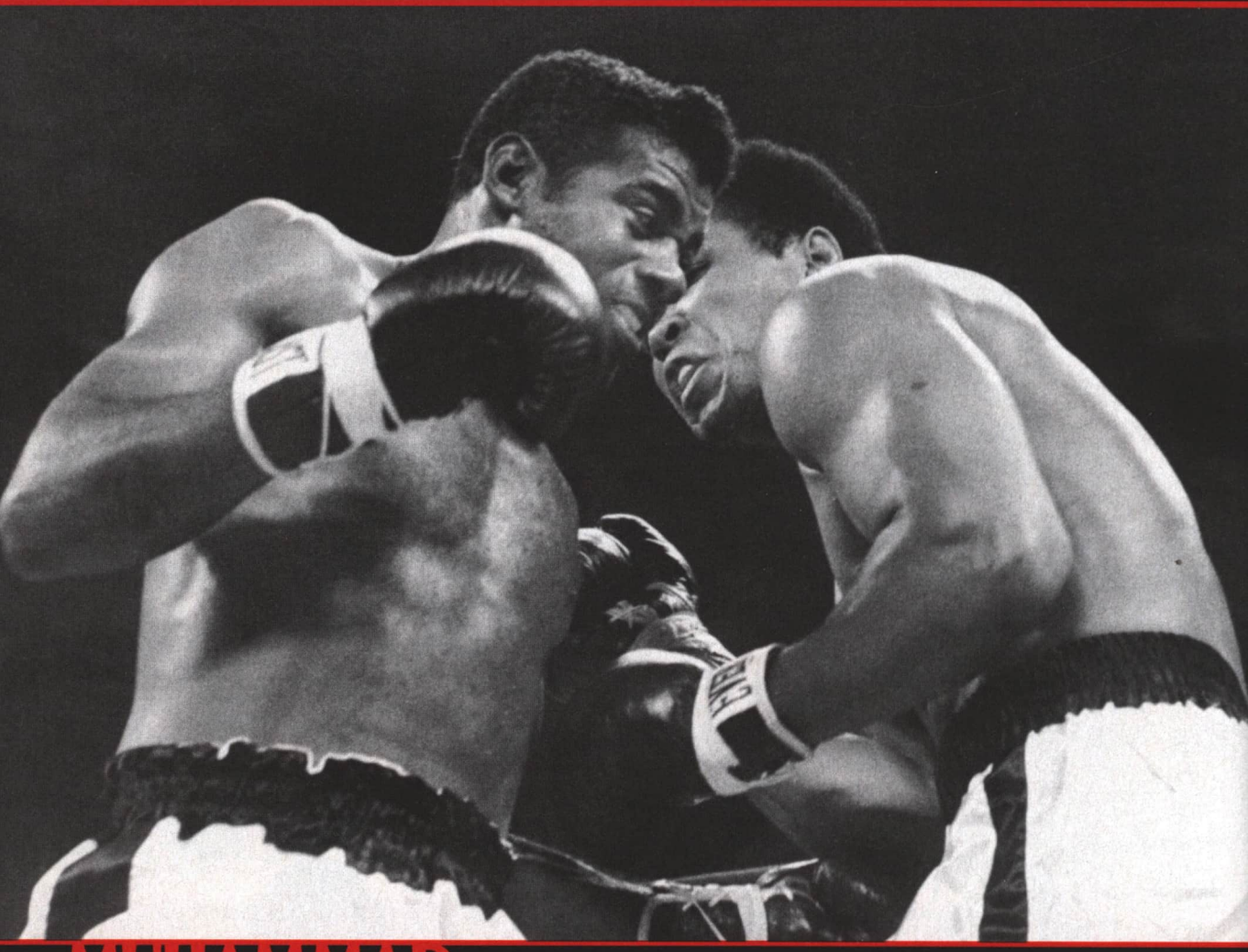
## 39 KO 11 ALVIN LEWIS
**Dublin, Ireland**
**July 19, 1972**

*Fighting for the second time in 23 days, it takes Ali 11 rounds to dispose of his former sparring partner. Lewis goes down from a right hand in the fifth round.*




## 40 KO 7 FLOYD PATTERSON
**New York, New York**
**September 20, 1972**

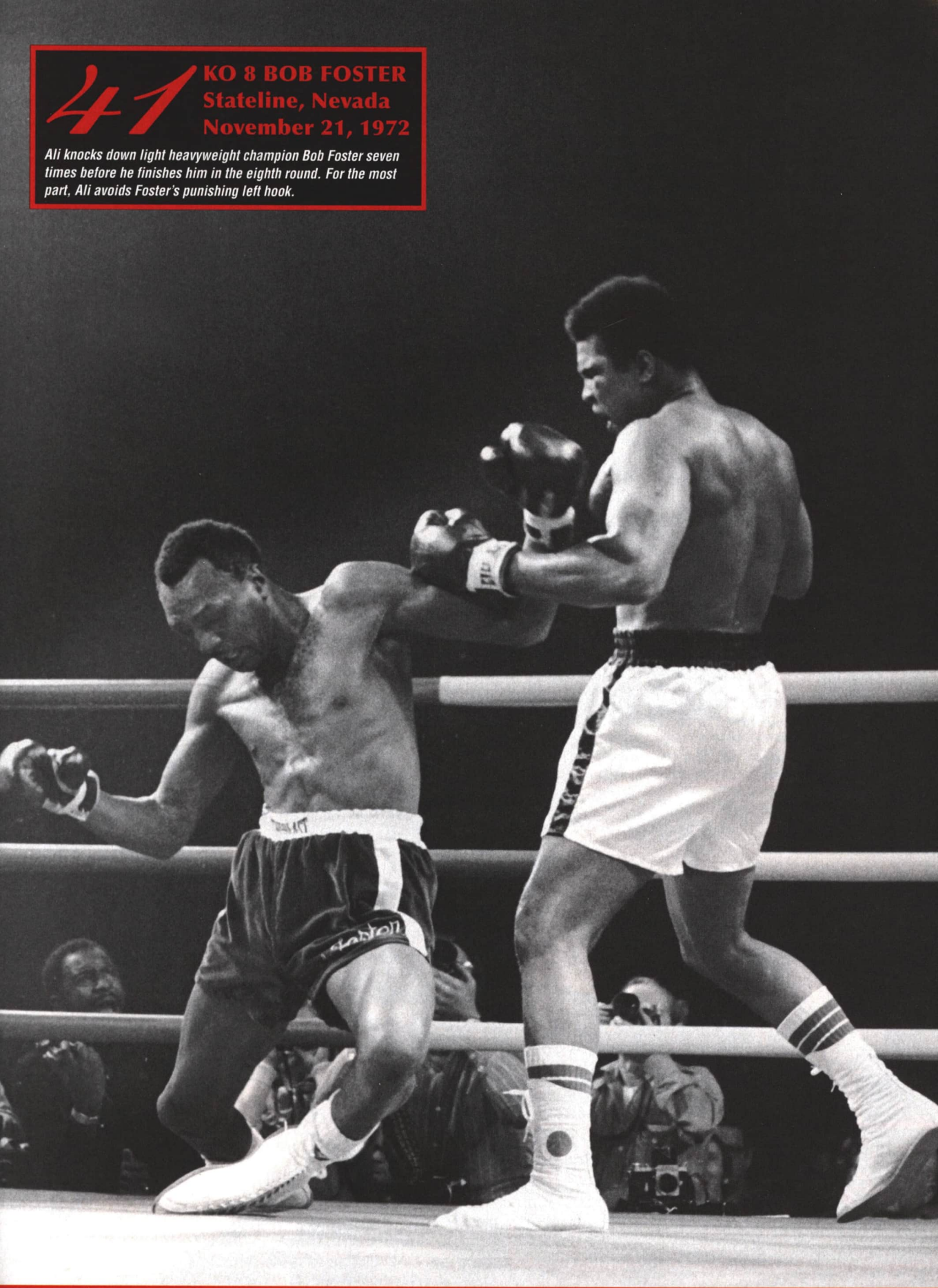
*In a battle of ex-champs, Ali and Patterson meet a second time almost seven years after their first encounter. The rematch looks a lot like the original, with Ali dominating. Patterson suffers a nasty gash on his left eyelid in the seventh round. It was Patterson's final fight.*



# 41

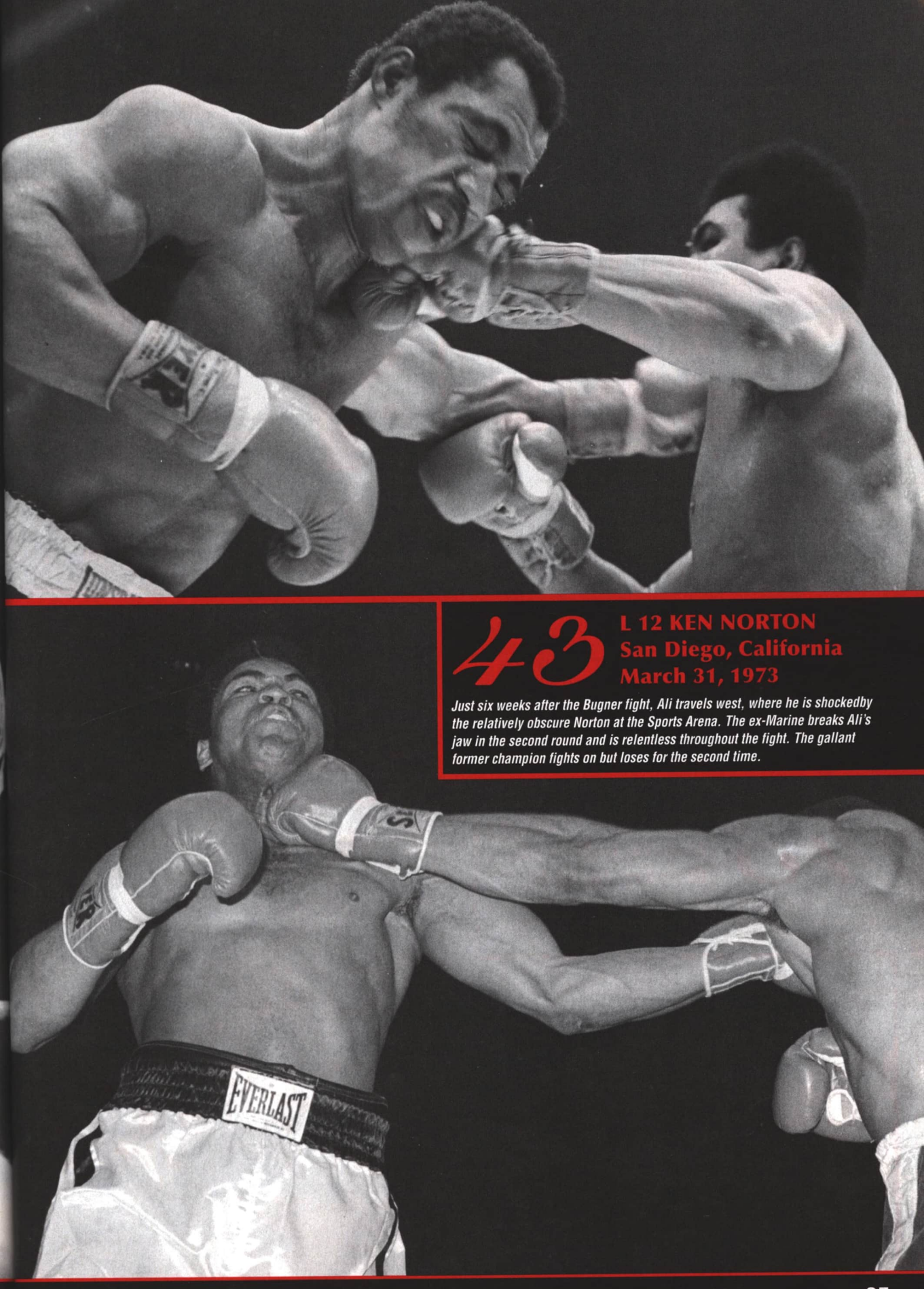
## KO 8 BOB FOSTER
## Stateline, Nevada
## November 21, 1972

*Ali knocks down light heavyweight champion Bob Foster seven times before he finishes him in the eighth round. For the most part, Ali avoids Foster's punishing left hook.*



## 42 W 12 JOE BUGNER
**Las Vegas, Nevada**
**February 14, 1973**

*Ali has a relatively easy time winning a 12-round unanimous decision over the European Champion Joe Bugner of England.*

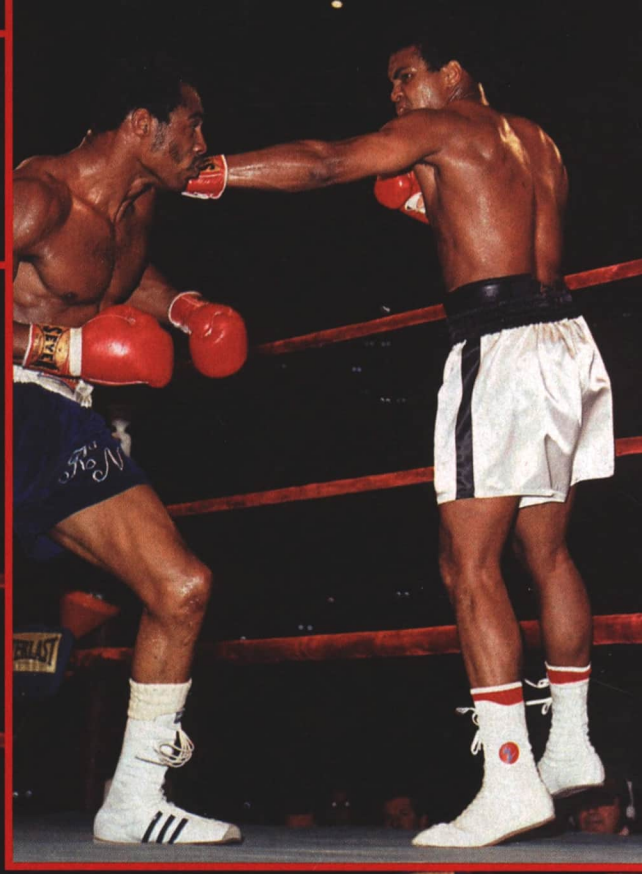



## 43 L 12 KEN NORTON
## San Diego, California
## March 31, 1973

*Just six weeks after the Bugner fight, Ali travels west, where he is shockedby the relatively obscure Norton at the Sports Arena. The ex-Marine breaks Ali's jaw in the second round and is relentless throughout the fight. The gallant former champion fights on but loses for the second time.*

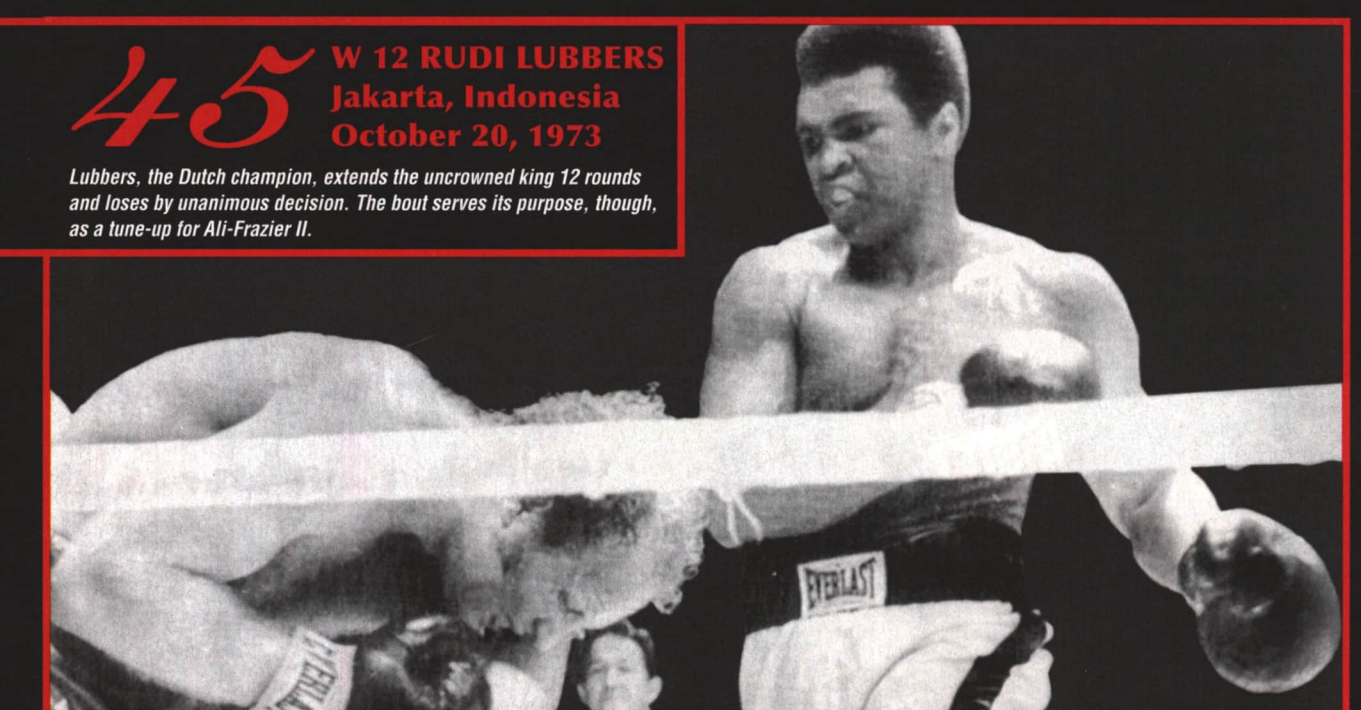
## 44 W 12 KEN NORTON
**Inglewood, California**
**September 10, 1973**

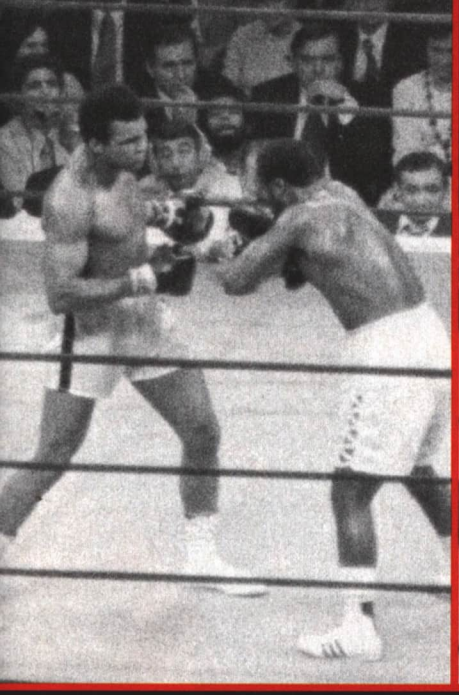
*Ali-Norton II at the Los Angeles Forum was billed as the "The Revenge Battle of Broken Jaw." Ali, with added incentive, outboxes Norton and captures a narrow split decision over 12 action-packed rounds.*

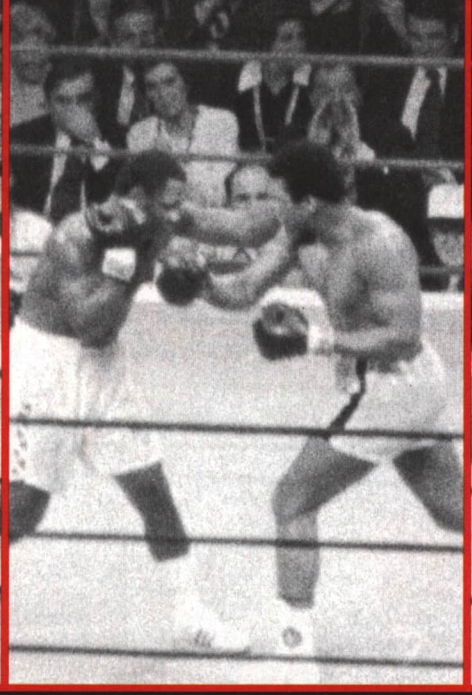


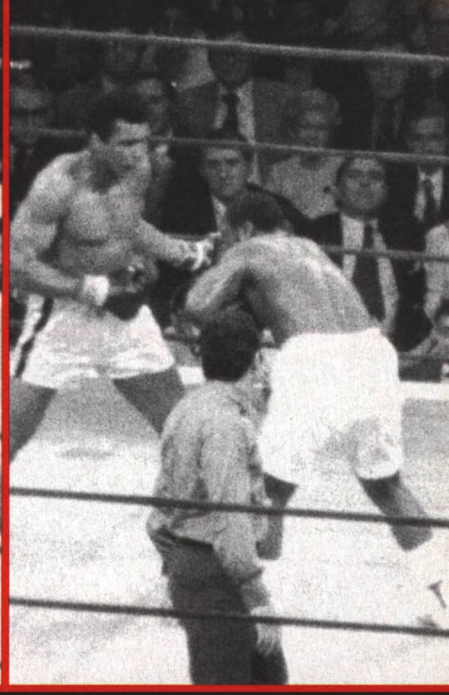
## 45 W 12 RUDI LUBBERS
**Jakarta, Indonesia**
**October 20, 1973**

*Lubbers, the Dutch champion, extends the uncrowned king 12 rounds and loses by unanimous decision. The bout serves its purpose, though, as a tune-up for Ali-Frazier II.*



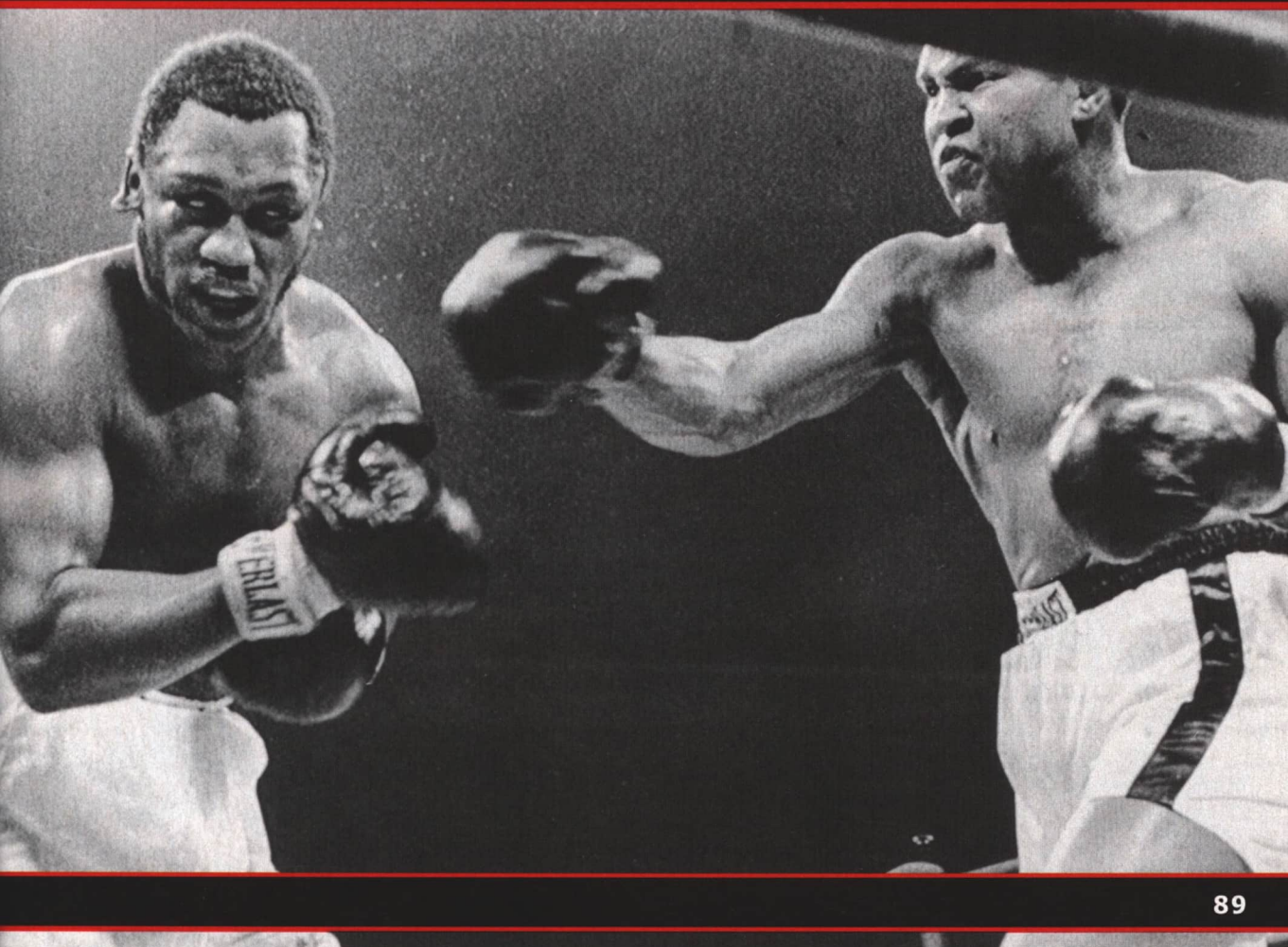






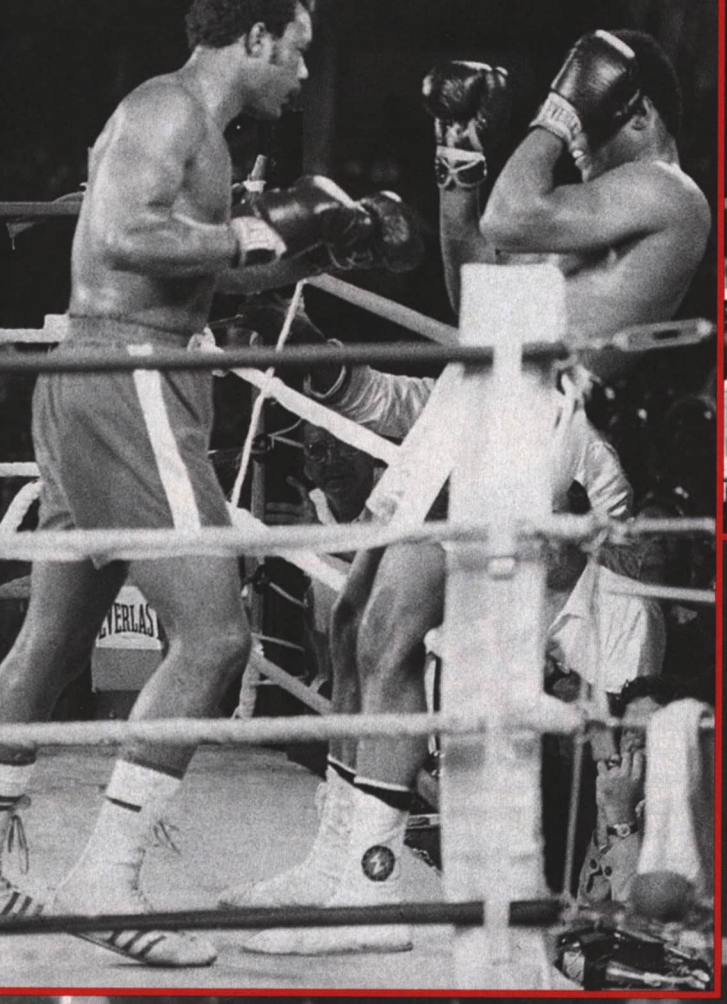
## 46 W 12 JOE FRAZIER
**New York, New York**
**January 28, 1974**

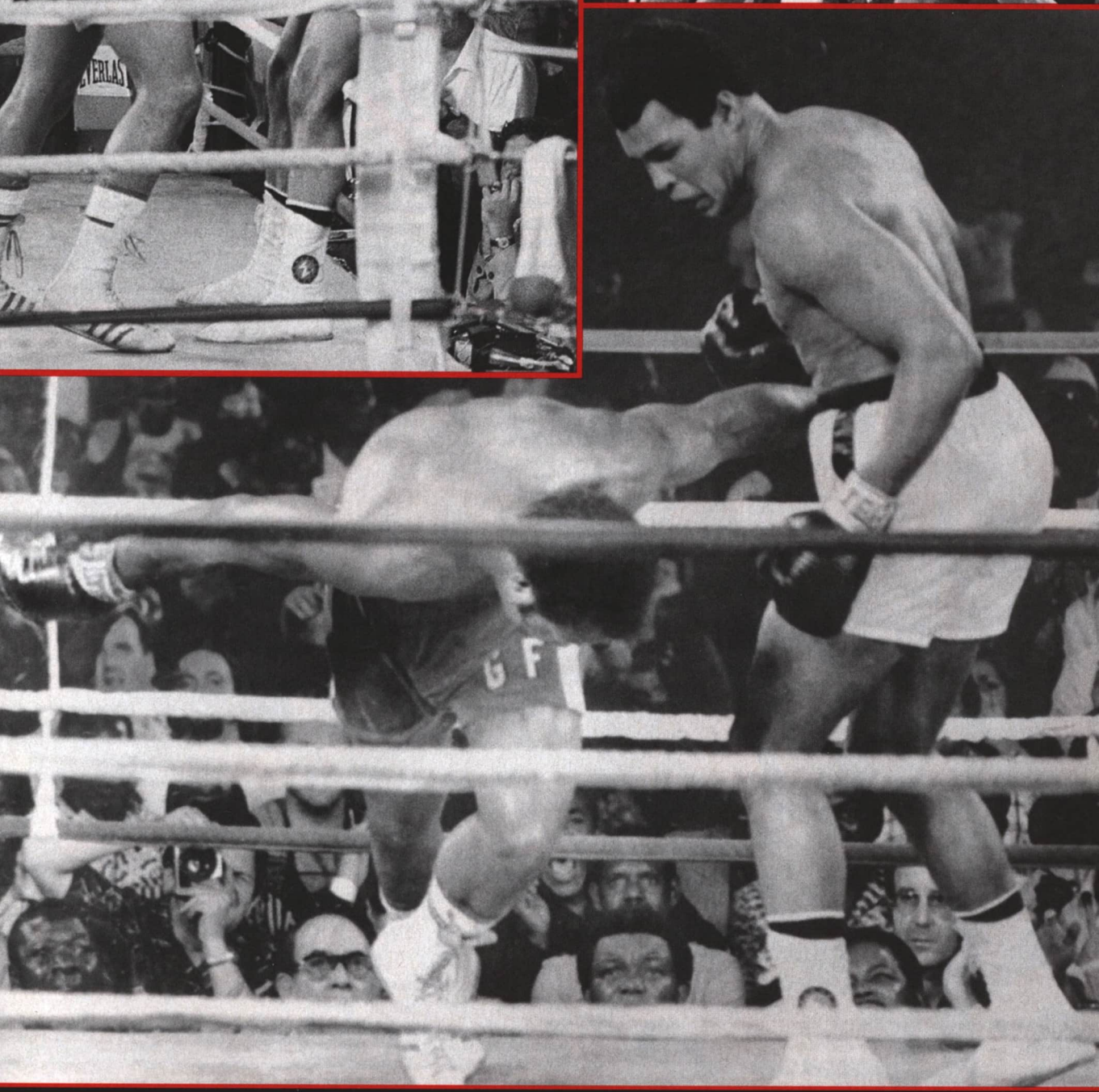
*Even though the bout doesn't match their 1971 epic in terms of action or ferocity, Ali is glad to win a 12-round unanimous decision in his rematch with Frazier at Madison Square Garden. The fight is marred by excessive holding by Ali and poor officiating.*



# 47 KO 8 GEORGE FOREMAN
## Kinshasa, Zaire
## October 30, 1974

*Ten years after a young Cassius Clay upset 7-1 favorite Sonny Liston to win the heavyweight title, Ali, a 3-1 underdog, shakes up the world again when he KOs the undefeated Foreman in eight rounds to regain the title. Ali spent several rounds leaning on the ropes conserving his energy, content to let Foreman bang away and tire himself out. This tactic became known as the "rope-a-dope."*



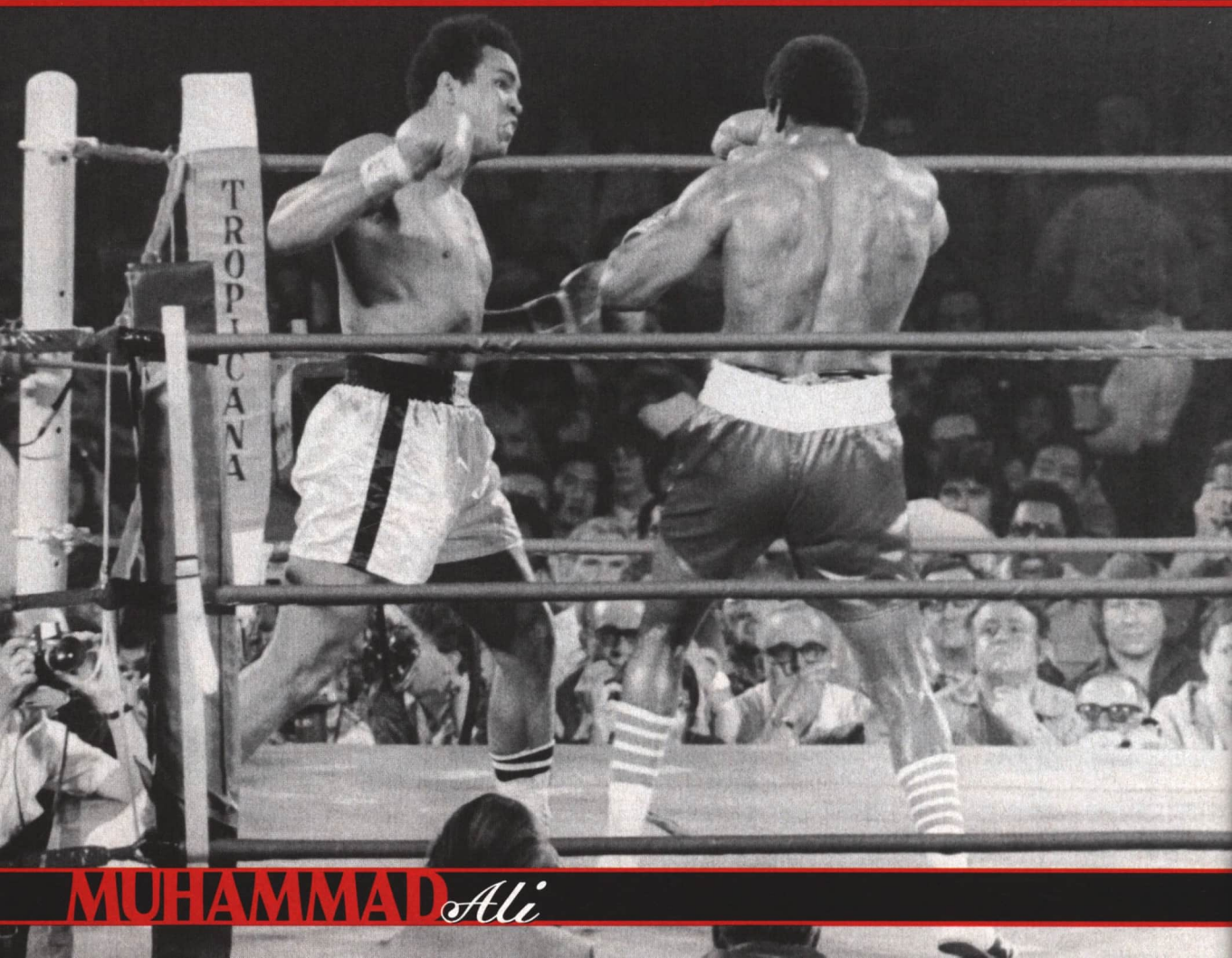


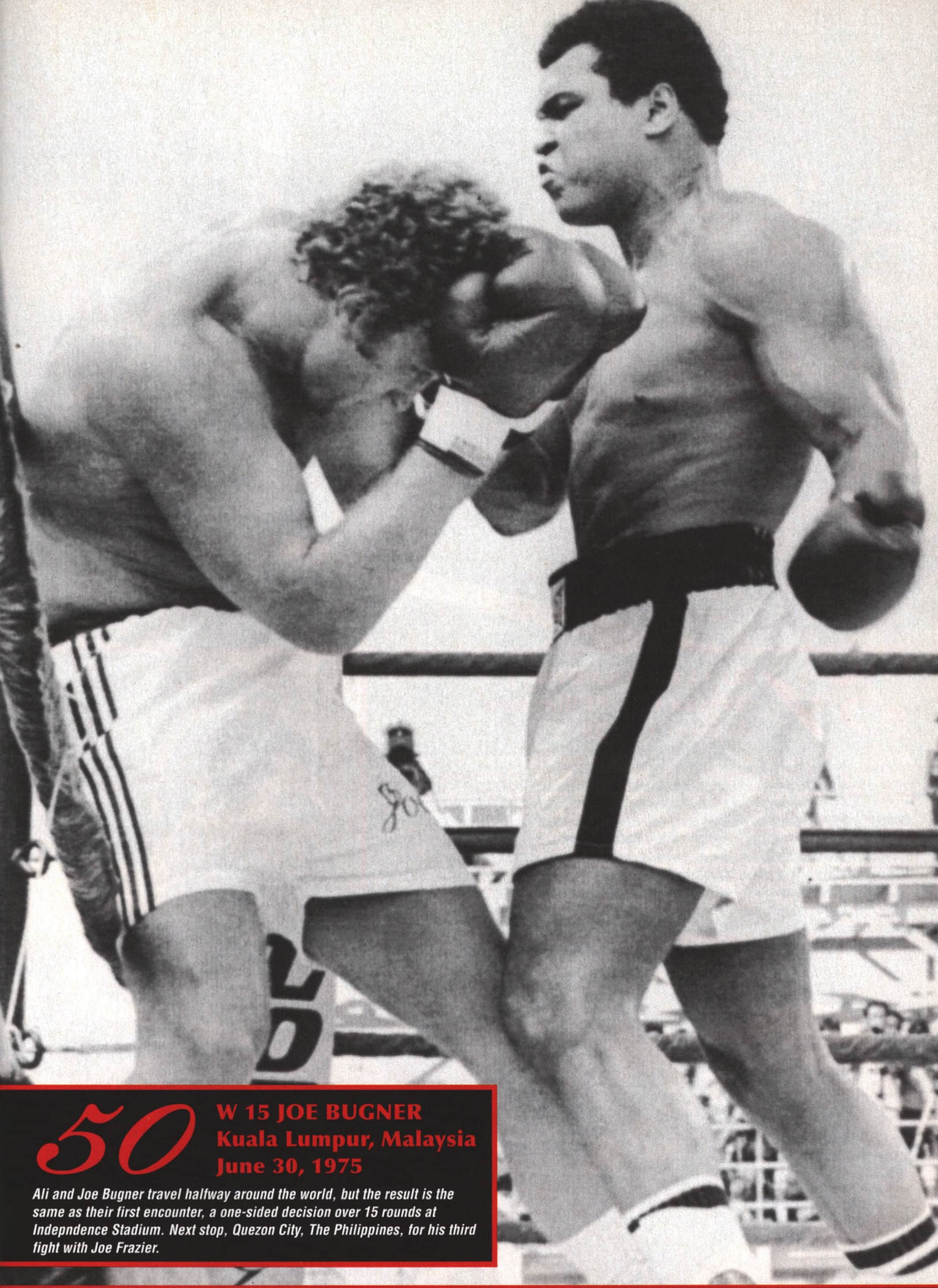
## 48 KO 15 CHUCK WEPNER
**Richfield, Ohio**
**March 24, 1975**

*Ali scores a 15th-round TKO over tough club fighter Chuck Wepner at the Coliseum. Ali spent most of the fight clowning and building up points before getting down to business. Wepner, known as "The Bayonne Bleeder," accomplishes two things: He steps on Ali's foot and knocks him down with a grazing punch in the ninth round, and his performance inspires a relatively unknown actor/director named Sylvester Stallone to write the movie* Rocky.

## 49 KO 11 RON LYLE
**Las Vegas Nevada**
**May 16, 1975**

*Lyle gives Ali a tough fight, especially with his aggressive attacks during the early and middle rounds. But Ali rallies and is hammering Lyle so severely in the 11th round that the referee is forced to stop the fight.*





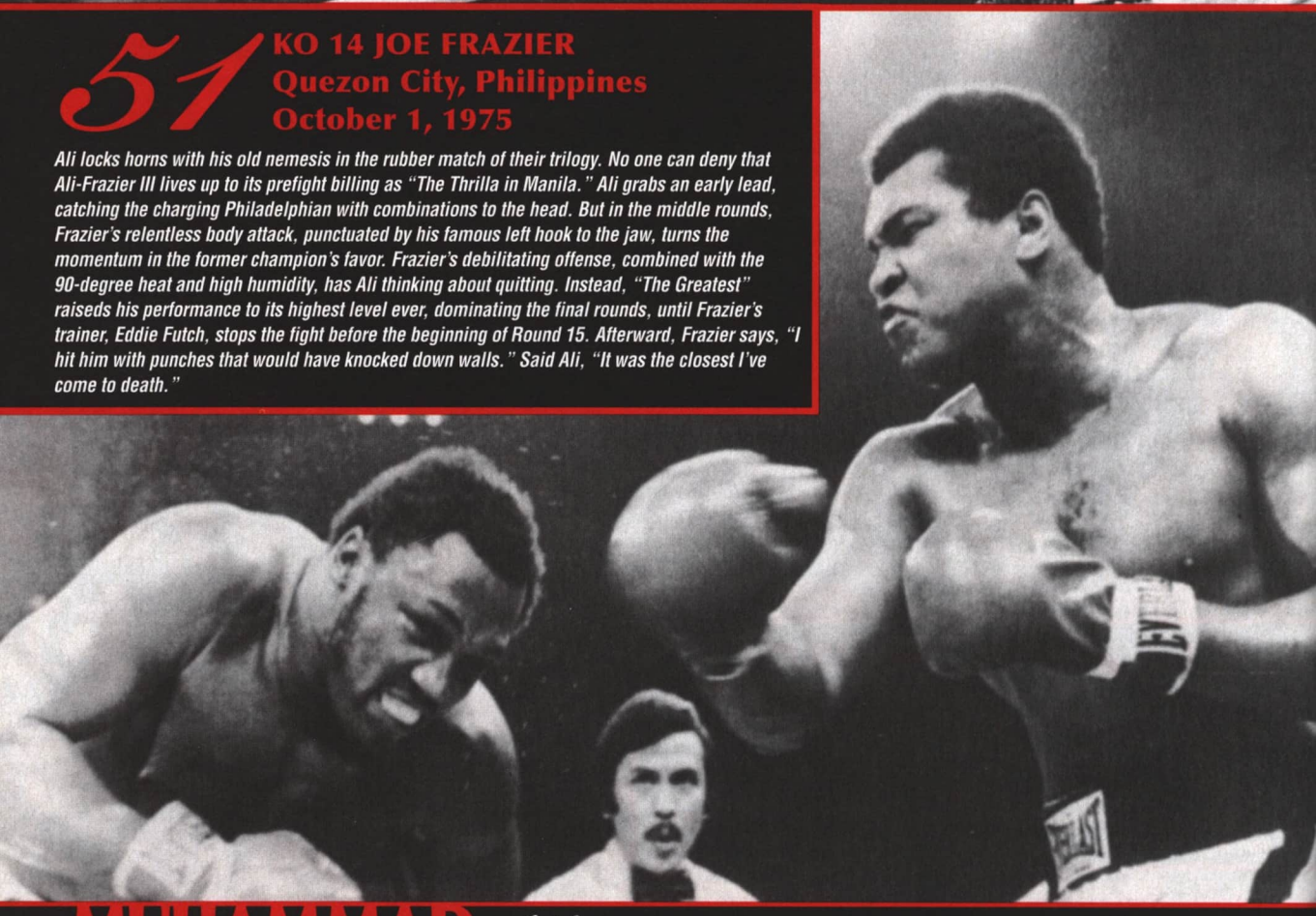
## 50 W 15 JOE BUGNER
## Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
## June 30, 1975

*Ali and Joe Bugner travel halfway around the world, but the result is the same as their first encounter, a one-sided decision over 15 rounds at Indepndence Stadium. Next stop, Quezon City, The Philippines, for his third fight with Joe Frazier.*

AP PHOTO/MITSUNORI CHIGITA

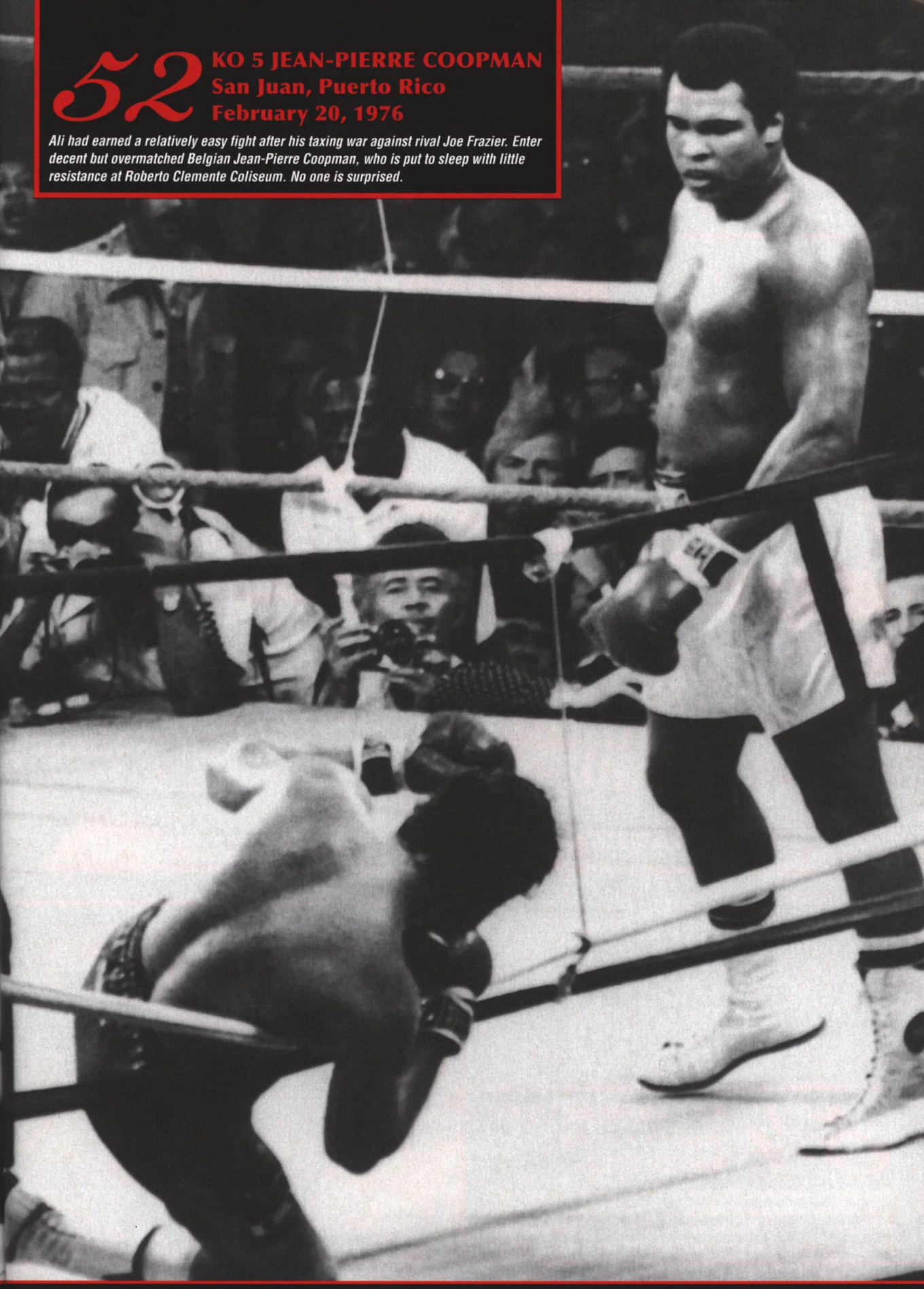
# 51 KO 14 JOE FRAZIER
## Quezon City, Philippines
## October 1, 1975

*Ali locks horns with his old nemesis in the rubber match of their trilogy. No one can deny that Ali-Frazier III lives up to its prefight billing as "The Thrilla in Manila." Ali grabs an early lead, catching the charging Philadelphian with combinations to the head. But in the middle rounds, Frazier's relentless body attack, punctuated by his famous left hook to the jaw, turns the momentum in the former champion's favor. Frazier's debilitating offense, combined with the 90-degree heat and high humidity, has Ali thinking about quitting. Instead, "The Greatest" raiseds his performance to its highest level ever, dominating the final rounds, until Frazier's trainer, Eddie Futch, stops the fight before the beginning of Round 15. Afterward, Frazier says, "I hit him with punches that would have knocked down walls." Said Ali, "It was the closest I've come to death."*



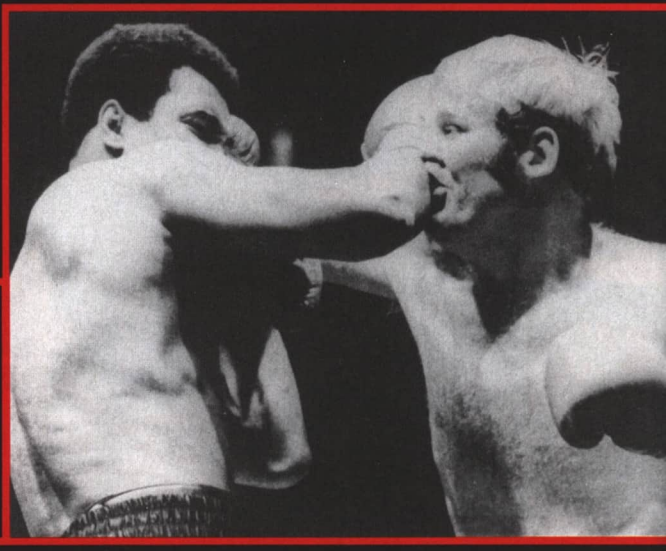
# 52 KO 5 JEAN-PIERRE COOPMAN
## San Juan, Puerto Rico
## February 20, 1976

*Ali had earned a relatively easy fight after his taxing war against rival Joe Frazier. Enter decent but overmatched Belgian Jean-Pierre Coopman, who is put to sleep with little resistance at Roberto Clemente Coliseum. No one is surprised.*



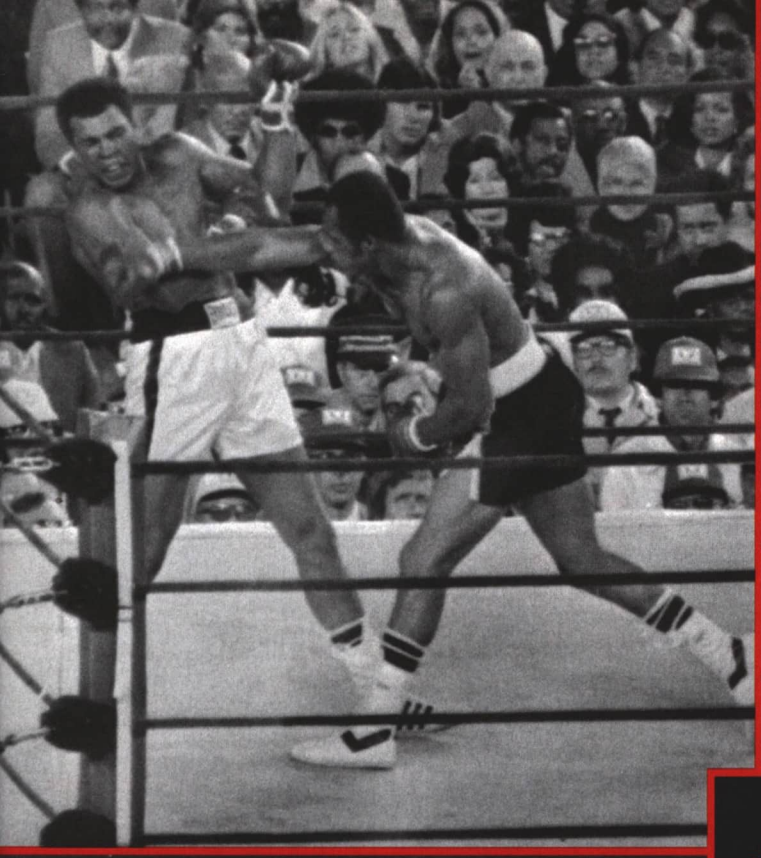
## 53 W 15 JIMMY YOUNG
**Landover, Maryland**
**April 30, 1976**

*Young, a slick-boxing Philadelphian who would go on to beat George Foreman, came up with a new defensive wrinkle for Ali. Sticking his head (and sometimes his body) so far outside of the ropes Ali couldn't hit him. The judges didn't seem to like the tactic, though; they awarded Ali a clear decision.*



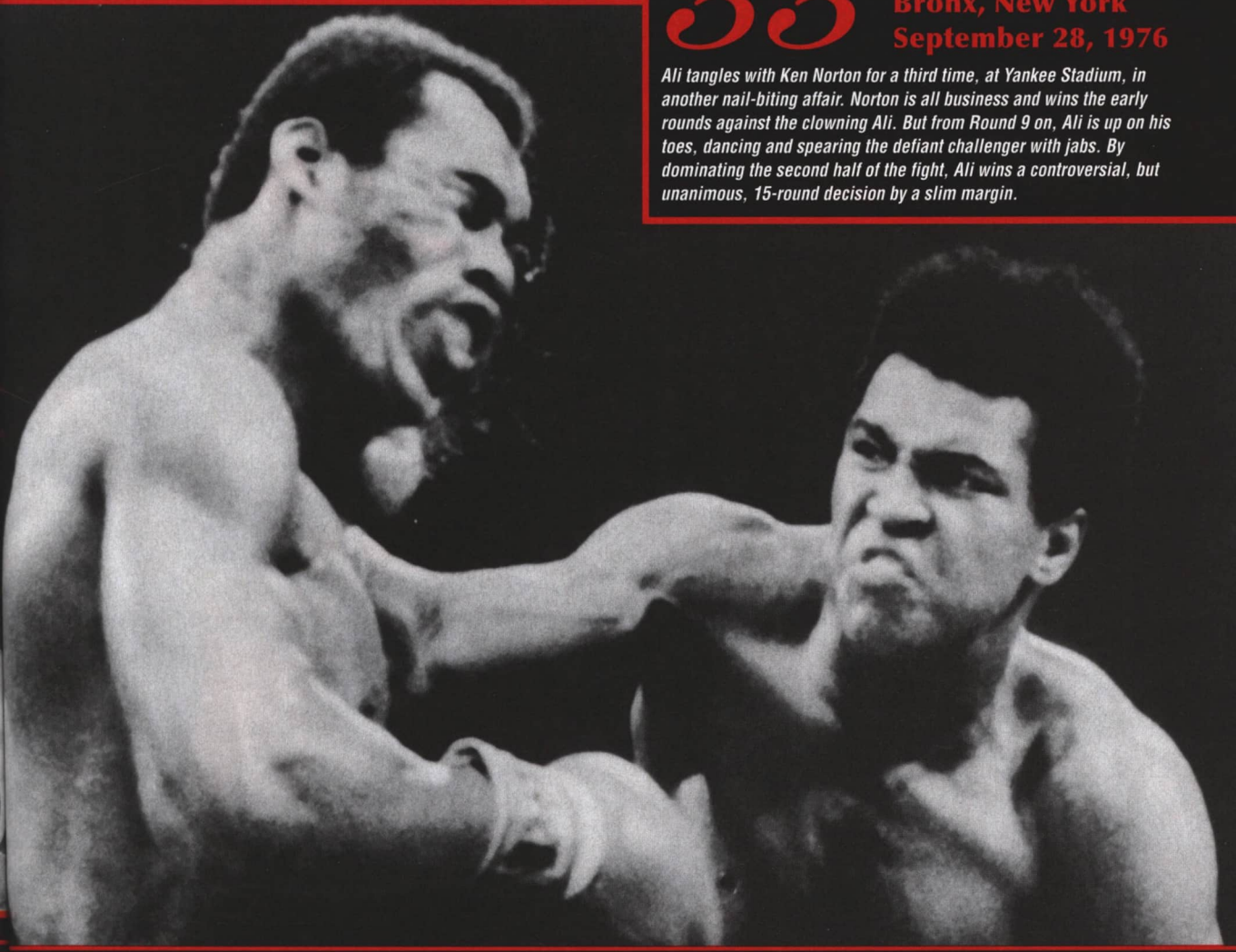
## 54 KO 5 RICHARD DUNN
**Munich, Germany**
**May 24, 1976**

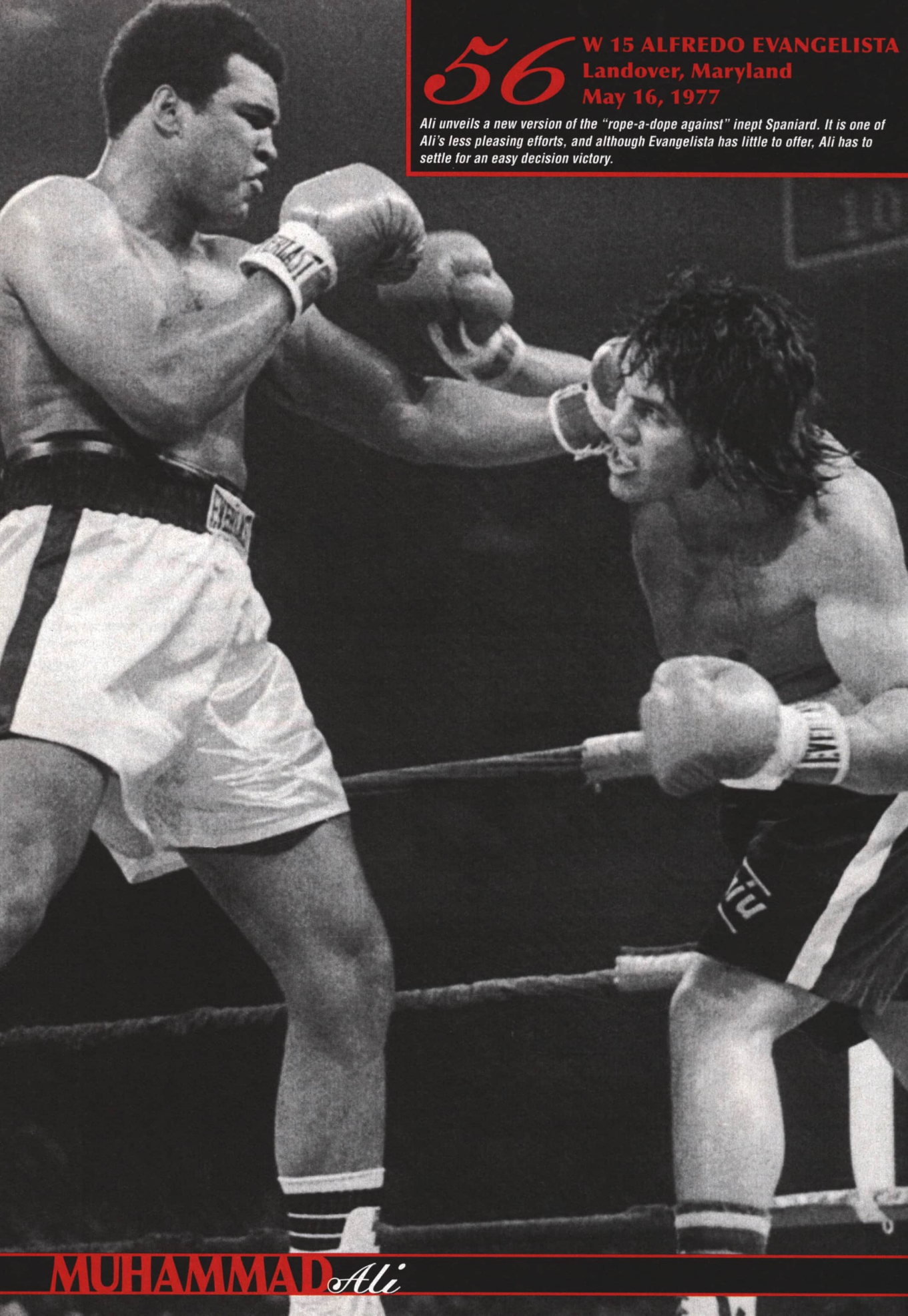
*The European heavyweight titleholder nails Ali with his best punch as he takes a forearm to the face at Olympic Hall. It barely gets the attention of the champ, who finishes off Dunn at 2:05 of the fifth round. The southpaw does gain one distinction, though: He would be the last man ever stopped by Ali.*



## 55 W 15 KEN NORTON
## Bronx, New York
## September 28, 1976

*Ali tangles with Ken Norton for a third time, at Yankee Stadium, in another nail-biting affair. Norton is all business and wins the early rounds against the clowning Ali. But from Round 9 on, Ali is up on his toes, dancing and spearing the defiant challenger with jabs. By dominating the second half of the fight, Ali wins a controversial, but unanimous, 15-round decision by a slim margin.*

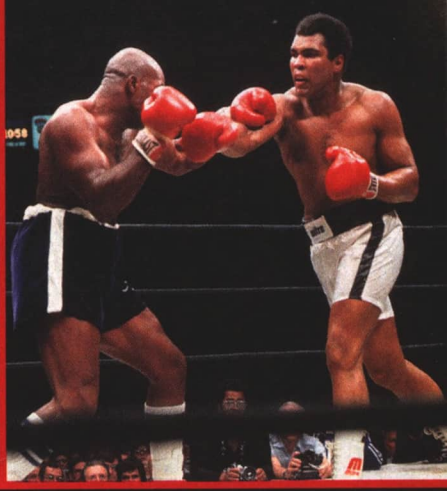




# 56

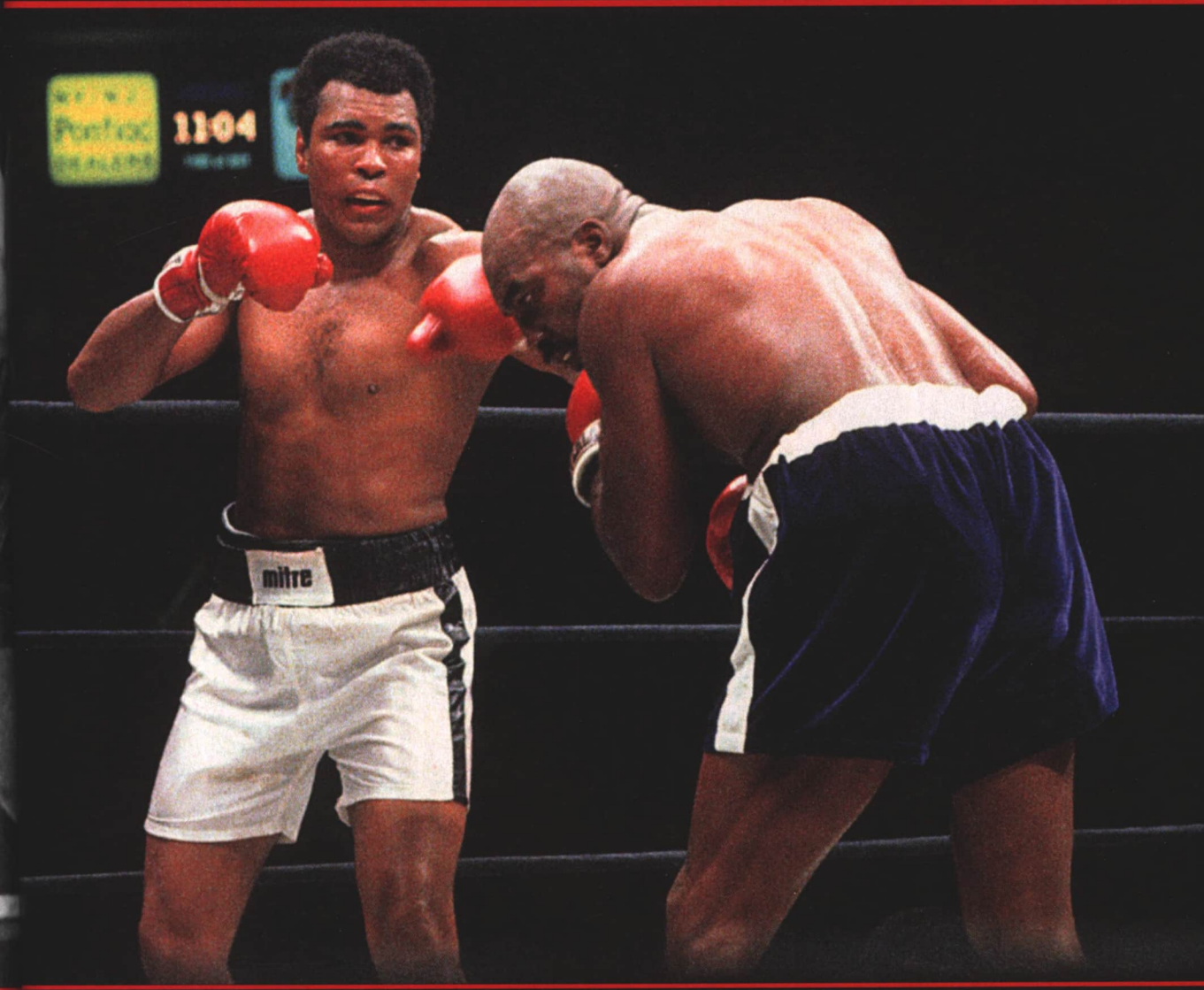
## W 15 ALFREDO EVANGELISTA
**Landover, Maryland**
**May 16, 1977**

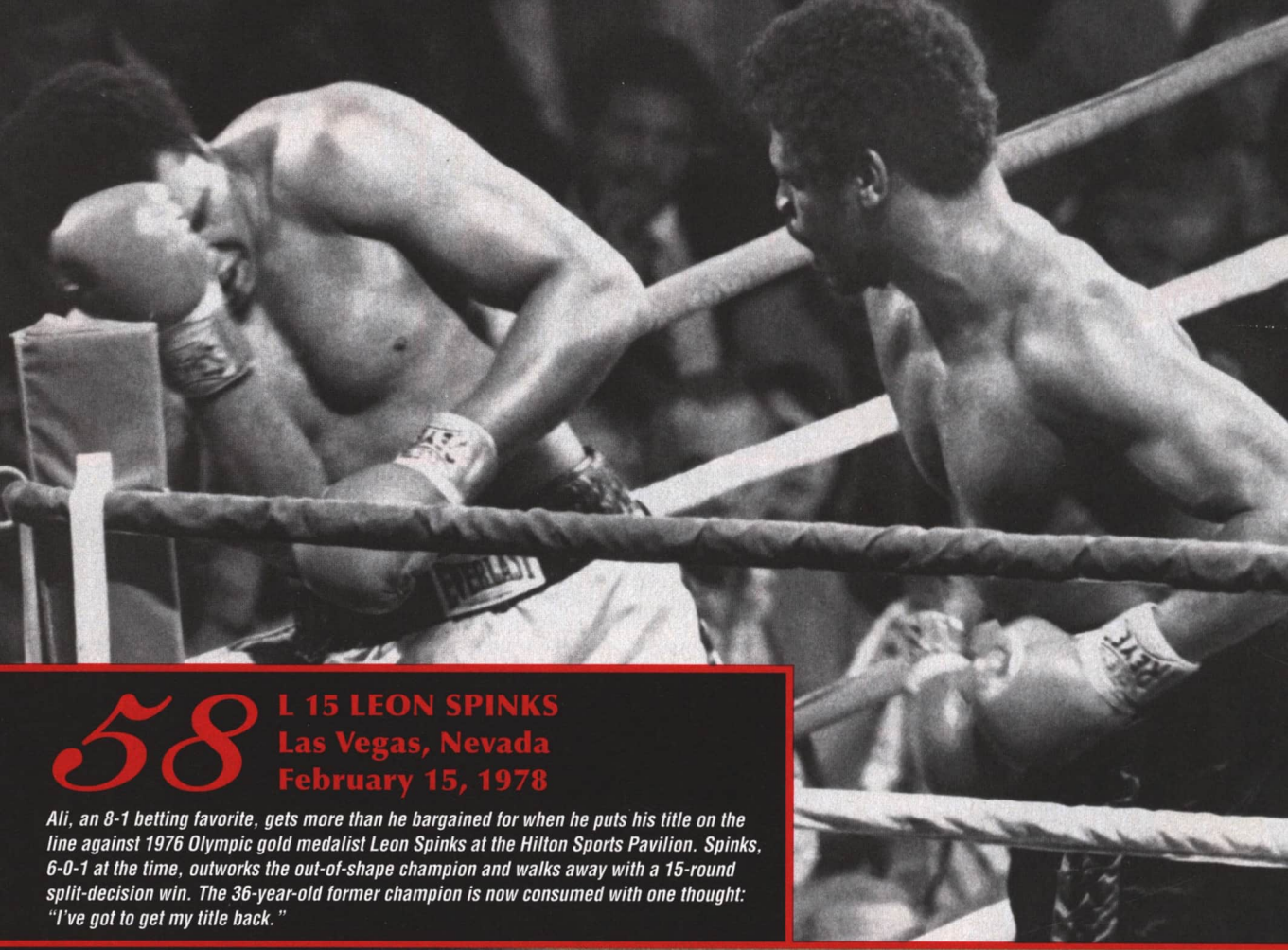
*Ali unveils a new version of the "rope-a-dope against" inept Spaniard. It is one of Ali's less pleasing efforts, and although Evangelista has little to offer, Ali has to settle for an easy decision victory.*



# 57 W 15 EARNIE SHAVERS
## New York, New York
## September 29, 1977

*In a scenario that has became all too familiar during his second reign as champion, Ali falls behind early against Earnie Shavers at Madison Square Garden. The powerful Shavers, whom Ali labeled "The Acorn," rocks the champion several times during the tough 15-rounder. But another late-rounds rally by Ali enables him to pull out a unanimous decision.*

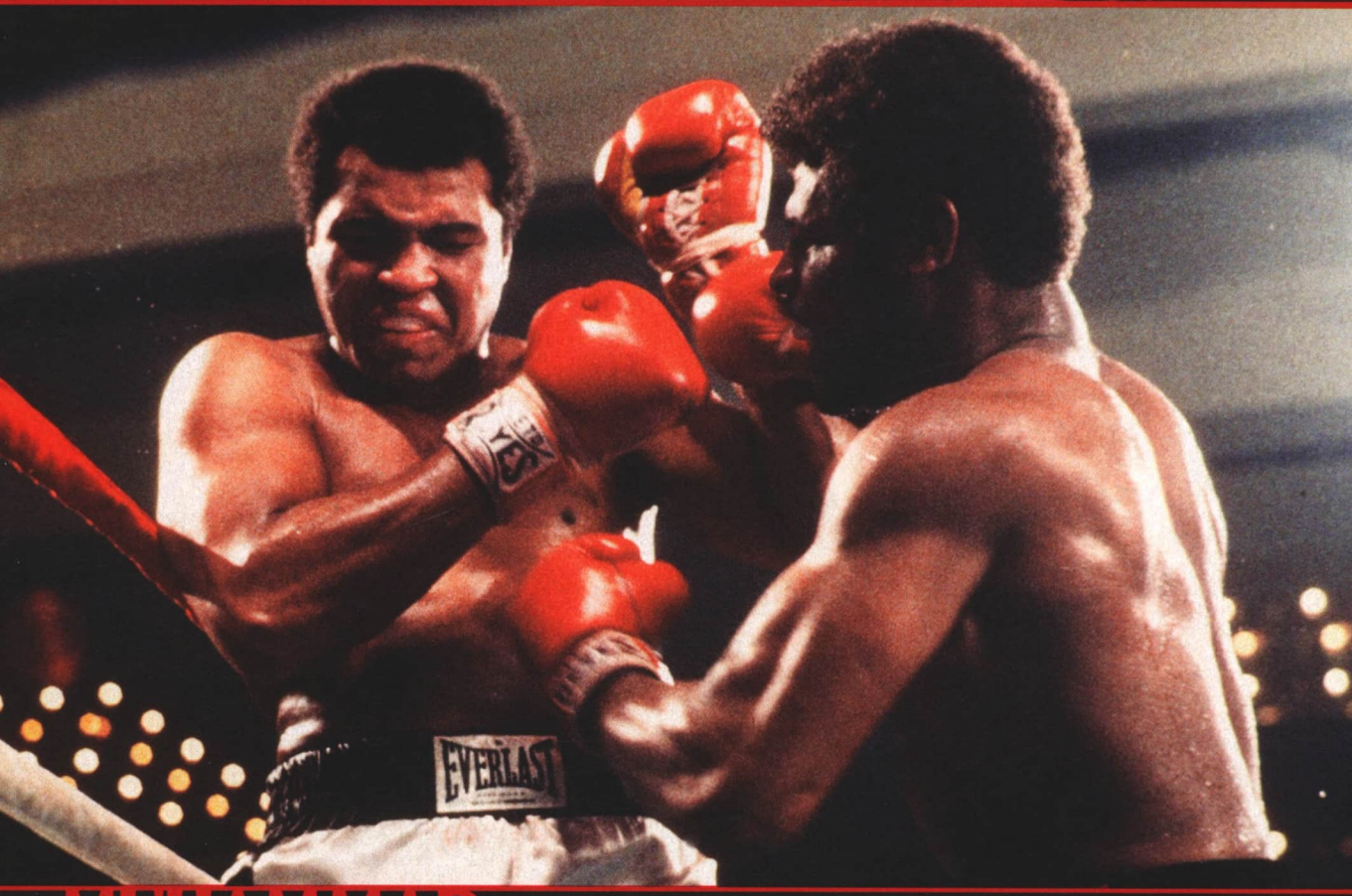


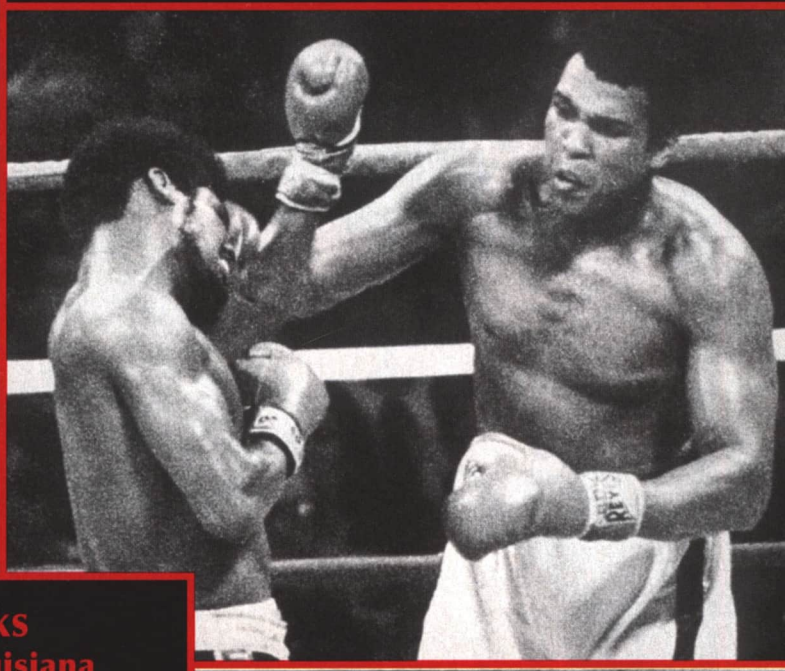


# 58

## L 15 LEON SPINKS
## Las Vegas, Nevada
## February 15, 1978

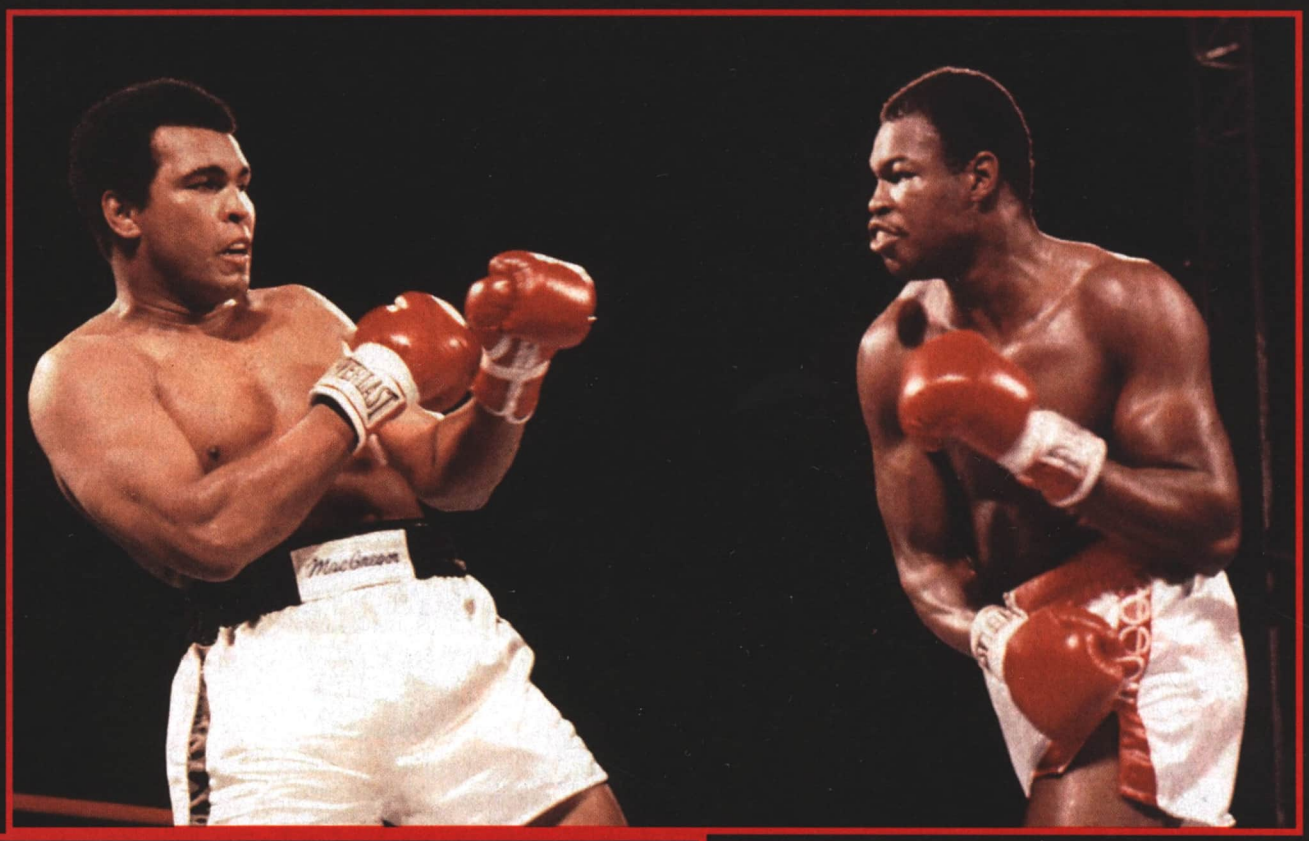
*Ali, an 8-1 betting favorite, gets more than he bargained for when he puts his title on the line against 1976 Olympic gold medalist Leon Spinks at the Hilton Sports Pavilion. Spinks, 6-0-1 at the time, outworks the out-of-shape champion and walks away with a 15-round split-decision win. The 36-year-old former champion is now consumed with one thought: "I've got to get my title back."*





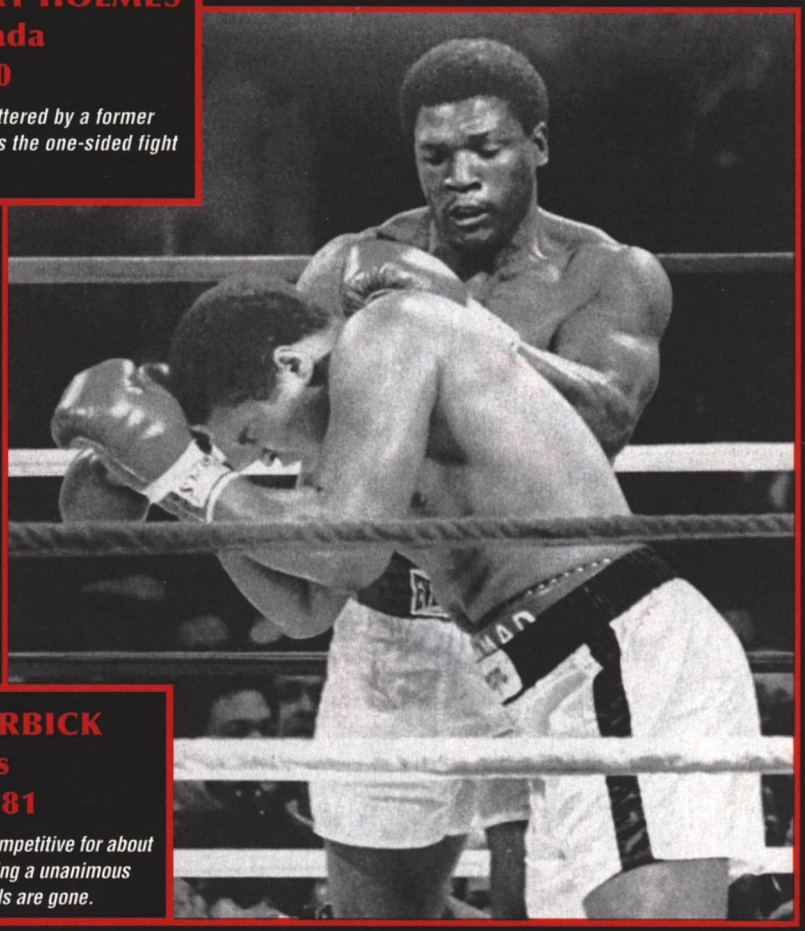
## 59 W 15 LEON SPINKS
## New Orleans, Louisiana
## September 15, 1978

*Ali doesn't take the young Spinks for granted this time, whipping himself into good shape during training camp and outboxing the champion to regain the title one last time. Ali would never again win a fight.*



## 60 KO BY 10 LARRY HOLMES
**Las Vegas, Nevada**
**October 2, 1980**

*At 38 and badly faded, Ali ends his retirement and is battered by a former sparring partner. Dundee, Ali's career-long trainer, stops the one-sided fight at the beginning of the 11th round.*



## 61 L 10 TREVOR BERBICK
**Nassau, Bahamas**
**December 11, 1981**

*Ali, almost 40, does about as well as he is capable. He is competitive for about two thirds of the fight before fading down the stretch and losing a unanimous decision. Ali admits afterward that his once-magnificent skills are gone.*

# The Professional Record of MUHAMMAD Ali

## 56-5 (37)

### 1960

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Oct. 29 | Tunney Hunsaker, Louisville, KY | W 6 |
| Dec. 27 | Herb Siler, Miami Beach, FL | KO 4 |

### 1961

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Jan. 17 | Tony Esperti, Miami Beach | KO 3 |
| Feb. 7 | Jimmy Robinson, Miami Beach | KO 1 |
| Feb. 21 | Donnie Fleeman, Miami Beach | KO 6 |
| April 19 | Lamar Clark, Louisville, KY | KO 2 |
| June 26 | Duke Sabedong, Las Vegas, NV | W 10 |
| July 22 | Alonzo Johnson, Louisville, KY | W 10 |
| Oct. 7 | Alex Miteff, Louisville | KO 6 |
| Nov. 29 | Willi Besmanoff, Louisville | KO 7 |

### 1962

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Feb. 10 | Sonny Banks, New York, NY | KO 4 |
| Feb. 28 | Don Warner, Miami Beach | KO 4 |
| April 23 | George Logan, Los Angeles, CA | KO 4 |
| May 19 | Billy Daniels, New York | KO 7 |
| July 20 | Alejandro Lavorante, Los Angeles | KO 5 |
| Nov. 15 | Archie Moore, Los Angeles | KO 4 |

### 1963

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Jan. 24 | Charlie Powell, Pittsburgh, PA | KO 3 |
| March 13 | Doug Jones, New York | W 10 |
| June 18 | Henry Cooper, London, England | KO 5 |

### 1964

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Feb. 25 | Sonny Liston, Miami Beach | KO 7 |
| | *(Wins World Heavyweight Title)* | |

### 1965

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| May 25 | Sonny Liston, Lewiston, ME | KO 1 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| Nov. 22 | Floyd Patterson, Las Vegas, NV | KO 12 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |

### 1966

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| March 29 | George Chuvalo, Toronto, Canada | W 15 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| May 21 | Henry Cooper, London | KO 6 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| Aug. 6 | Brian London, London | KO 3 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| Sept. 10 | Karl Mildenberger, Frankfurt, Germany | KO 12 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| Nov. 14 | Cleveland Williams, Houston, TX | KO 3 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |

### 1967

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Feb. 6 | Ernie Terrell, Houston | W 15 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| March 22 | Zora Folley, New York | KO 7 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |

### 1970

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Oct. 26 | Jerry Quarry, Atlanta, GA | KO 3 |
| Dec. 7 | Oscar Bonavena, New York | KO 15 |

### 1971

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| March 8 | Joe Frazier, New York | L 15 |
| | *(For World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| July 26 | Jimmy Ellis, Houston | KO 12 |
| Nov. 17 | Buster Mathis, Houston | W 12 |
| Dec. 26 | Juergen Blin, Zurich, Switzerland | KO 7 |

### 1972

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| April 1 | Mac Foster, Tokyo, Japan | W 15 |
| May 1 | George Chuvalo, Vancouver, Canada | W 12 |
| June 27 | Jerry Quarry, Las Vegas | KO 7 |
| July 19 | Alvin Lewis, Dublin, Ireland | KO 11 |
| Sept. 20 | Floyd Patterson, New York | KO 7 |
| Nov. 21 | Bob Foster, Stateline, NV | KO 8 |

### 1973

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Feb. 14 | Joe Bugner, Las Vegas | W 12 |
| March 31 | Ken Norton, San Diego, CA | L 12 |
| Sept. 10 | Ken Norton, Inglewood, CA | W 12 |
| Oct. 20 | Rudi Lubbers, Jakarta, Indonesia | W 12 |

### 1974

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Jan. 28 | Joe Frazier, New York | W 12 |
| Oct. 30 | George Foreman, Kinshasa, Congo | KO 8 |
| | *(Wins World Heavyweight Title)* | |

### 1975

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| March 24 | Chuck Wepner, Richfield, OH | KO 15 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| May 16 | Ron Lyle, Las Vegas | KO 11 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| June 30 | Joe Bugner, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia | W 15 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| Oct. 1 | Joe Frazier, Quezon City, Philippines | KO 14 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |

### 1976

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Feb. 20 | Jean-Pierre Coopman, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico | KO 5 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| April 30 | Jimmy Young, Landover, MD | W 15 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| May 24 | Richard Dunn, Munich, Germany | KO 5 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| Sept. 28 | Ken Norton, Bronx, NY | W 15 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |

### 1977

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| May 16 | Alfredo Evangelista, Landover | W 15 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| Sept. 29 | Earnie Shavers, New York | W 15 |
| | *(Retains World Heavyweight Title)* | |

### 1978

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Feb. 15 | Leon Spinks, Las Vegas | L 15 |
| | *(Loses World Heavyweight Title)* | |
| Sept. 15 | Leon Spinks, New Orleans, LA | W 15 |
| | *(Wins World Heavyweight Title)* | |

### 1980

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Oct. 2 | Larry Holmes, Las Vegas | KO by 10 |
| | *(For WBC Heavyweight Titlte)* | |

### 1981

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Dec. 11 | Trevor Berbick, Nassau, Bahamas | L 10 |

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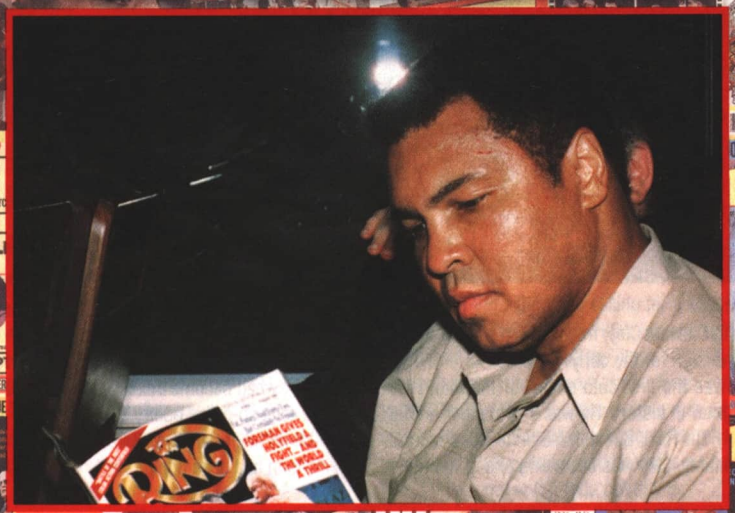
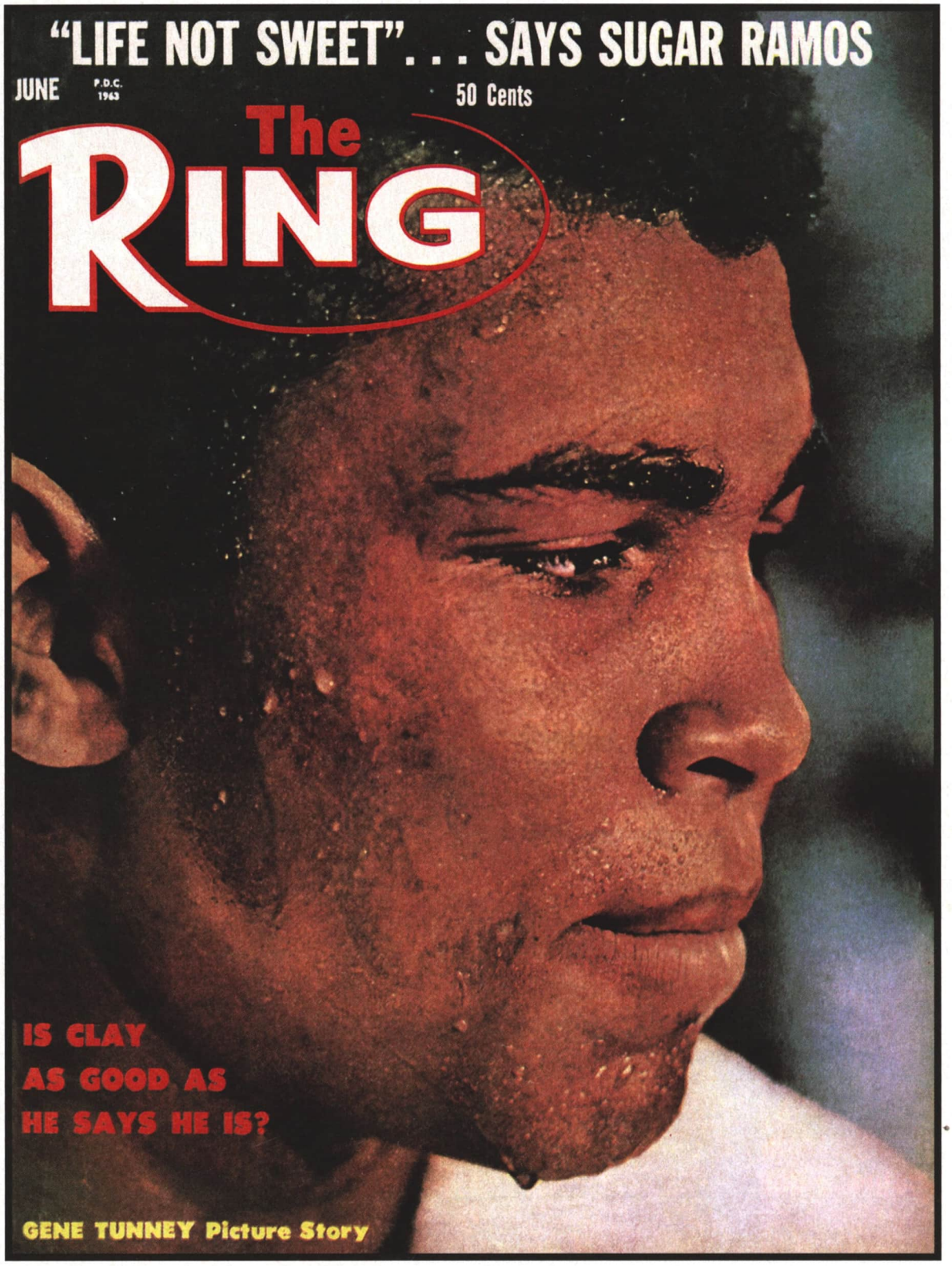
# MUHAMMAD *Ali*

## The Greatest's Greatest The RING Covers

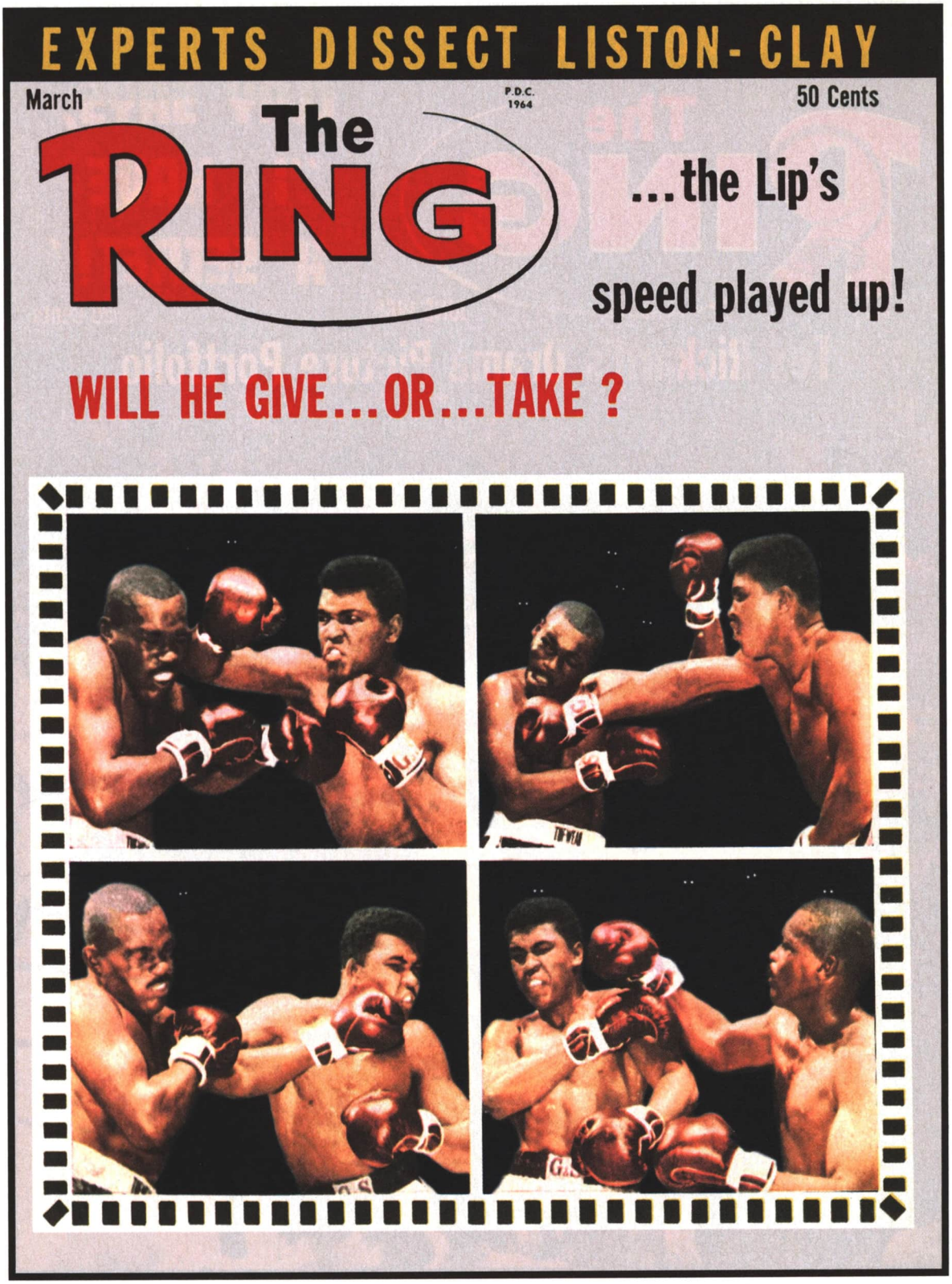
*Muhammad Ali's image graced 81 RING covers during his illustrious career. We have selected eight that are especially compelling, based on either the look of the cover, its historical significance, or a combination of the two.*






**Date:** June 1963
**Cover:** The tight close-up of young Cassius Clay, fresh from a sweaty workout, was an unusually progressive design for the early-'60s.
**Why Ali, why this issue?** It was the first solo cover for the man who would become the most famous fighter in history. He was a contender on the rise at the time, rated number two by THE RING. But with his undefeated record, flashy style, and over-the-top personality, Clay was becoming one of the most talked-about athletes in the world.

**Cover Story:** Dan Daniel wrote how a proposed bout between contenders Cassius Clay and Floyd Patterson collapsed when Patterson and champ Sonny Liston instead agreed to a rematch. He also wrote that after his victory over Doug Jones, Clay had become boxing's number-one attraction: "Clay's brash boasting, his efforts at so-called poetry, his living up to every rule and regulation in the old and almost forgotten book of Ballyhoo, built up an attraction which American boxing long had been hoping for."

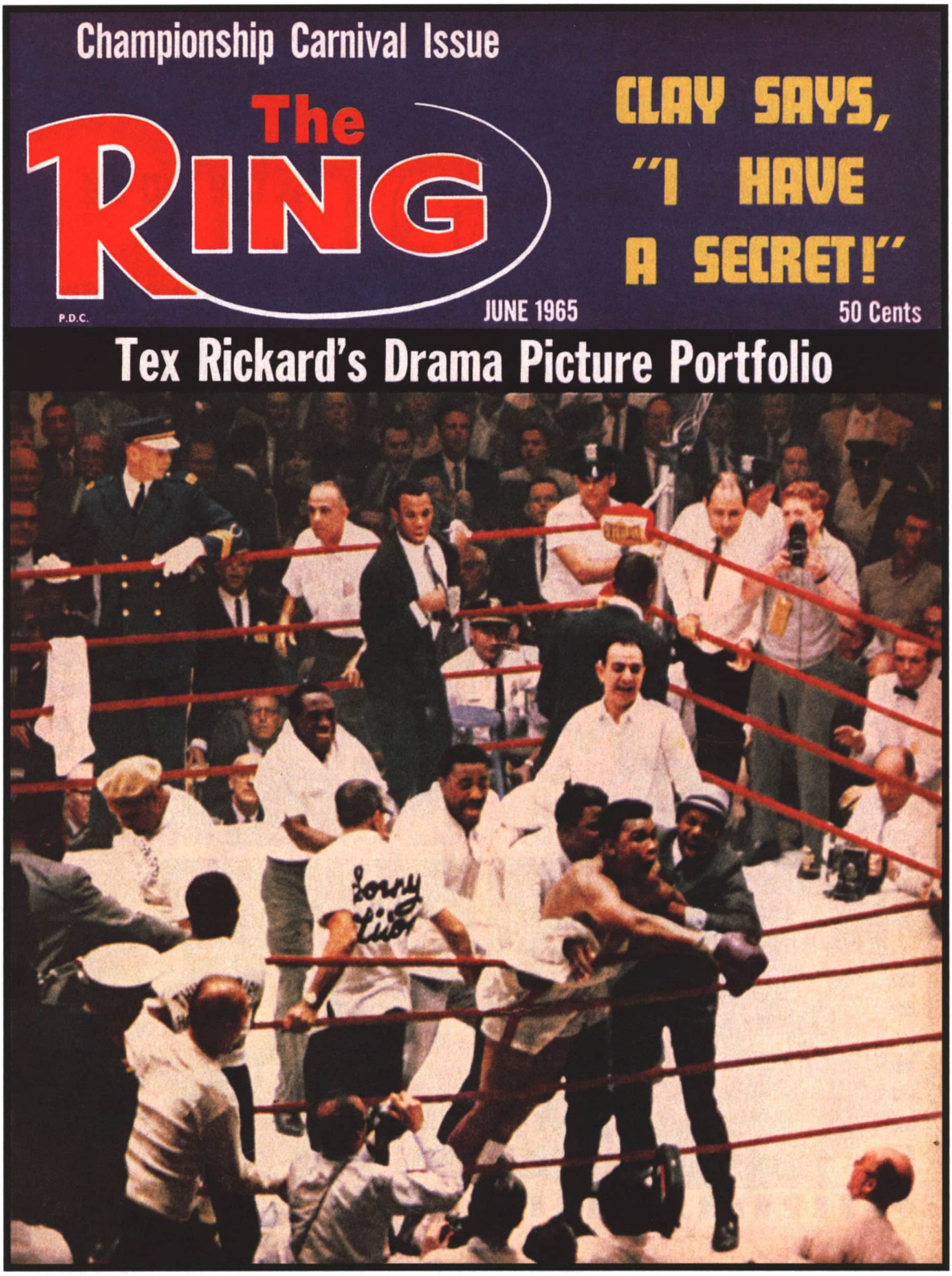



**Date:** March 1964

**Cover:** In another of his early covers, Clay is pictured exchanging punches with Doug Jones in a series of four action shots.

**Why Ali, why this issue?** Clay was a rising star in March 1964, selected as The Ring's 1963 Fighter of the Year. Rated number one by The Ring, Clay was 22-0 (19) and getting ready to enter the biggest fight of his life, a challenge of world heavyweight champion Sonny Liston.

**Cover Story:** Clay was calling for a knockout of Sonny Liston in the eighth round of their February 25, 1964, heavyweight title fight, but "if he keeps talking jive, he will go in five," said the brash 1960 Olympic light heavyweight gold medal winner in a story headlined "Liston Moves, Thinks Slow," by Cassius Clay, as told to Dan Daniel. "You will notice that big men who move slowly are inclined to think slowly. He doesn't use his brain fast enough to outgeneral me in the ring," Clay told Daniel. People suggested he wait a year, but "The Louisville Lip" responded with, "If I am not ready, then nobody is."

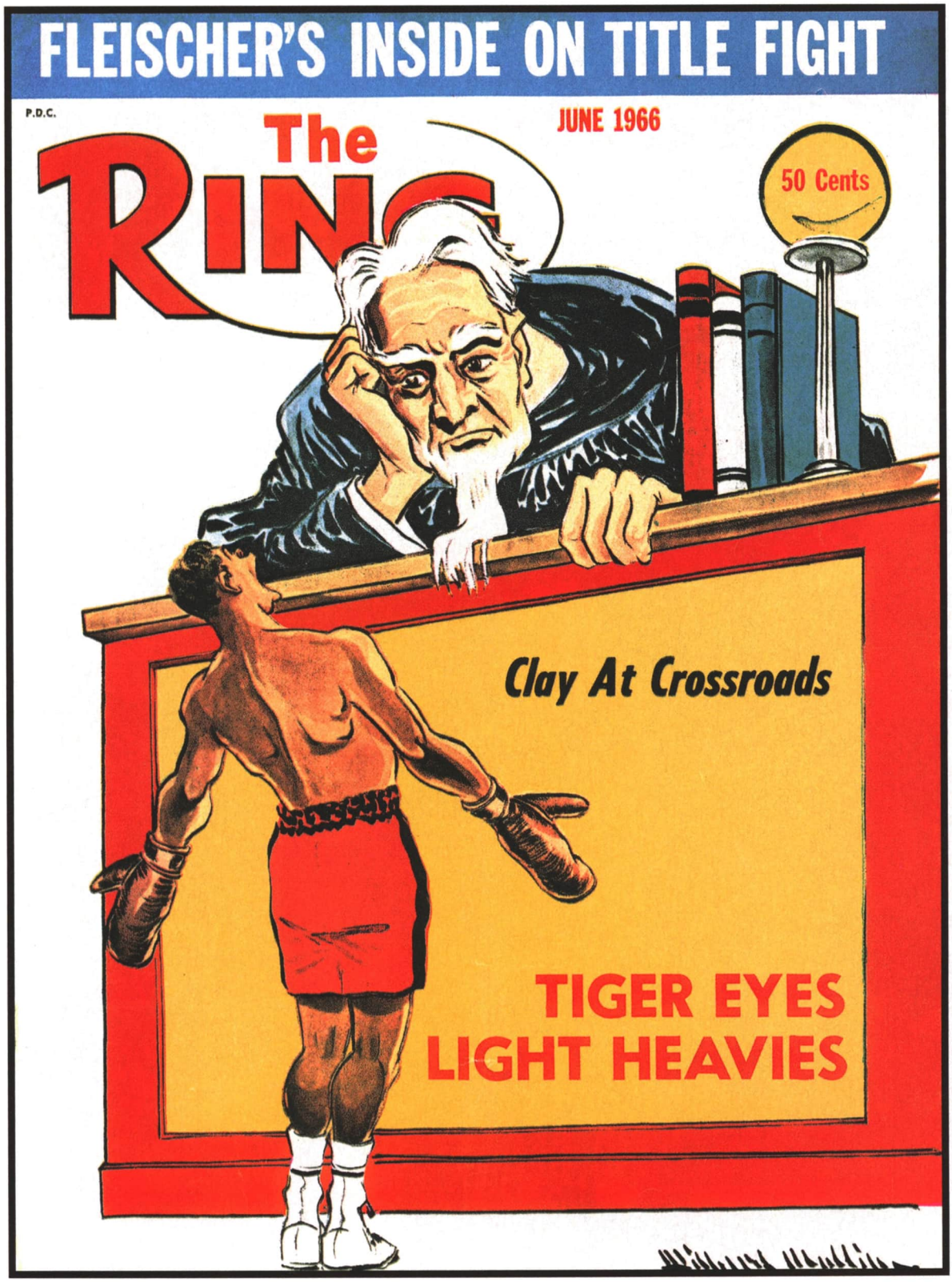



**Date:** June 1965

**Cover:** An overhead photo of the new champion celebrating his victory over Sonny Liston. By this time, he had changed his name to Muhammad Ali, though THE RING continued to call him Cassius Clay.

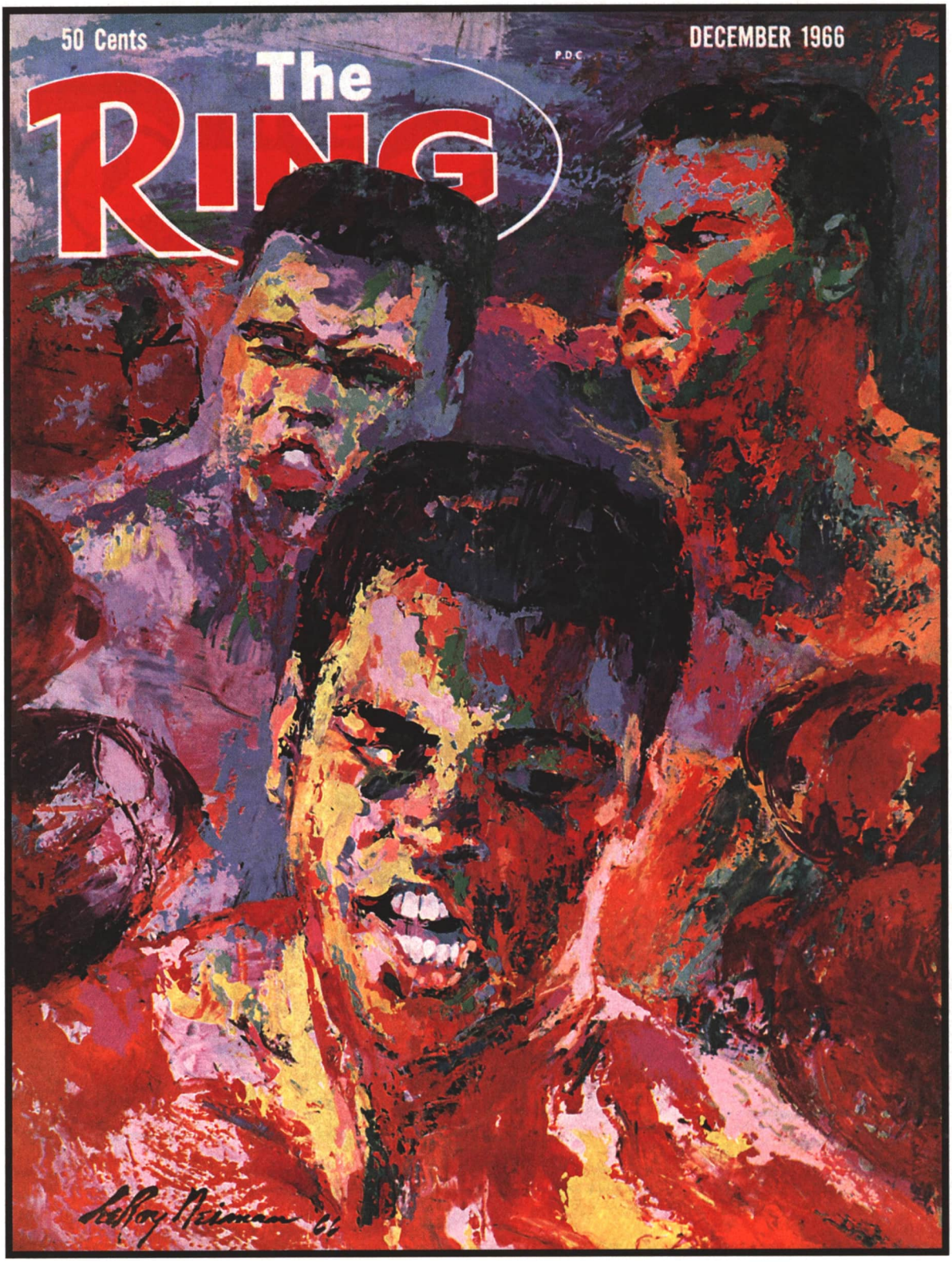
**Why Ali, why this issue?** Ali was about to take on Sonny Liston in a rematch. There was still widespread speculation as to whether or not his initial victory over Liston was a fluke. By this time, the champ had changed his name to Muhammad Ali, and while THE RING still referred to him as Cassius Clay, the magazine began loosening its stance on that subject, sometimes dropping in a few Muhammad references.

**Cover Story:** In a story titled "Clay Says, 'I Have A Secret!'" by Dan Daniel, Ali playfully boasted that he would beat Liston again, then vanquish Floyd Patterson and George Chuvalo. "Studying the films, I have discovered what Liston positively cannot do, especially at his age," Ali said cryptically, though he wouldn't reveal what it was.



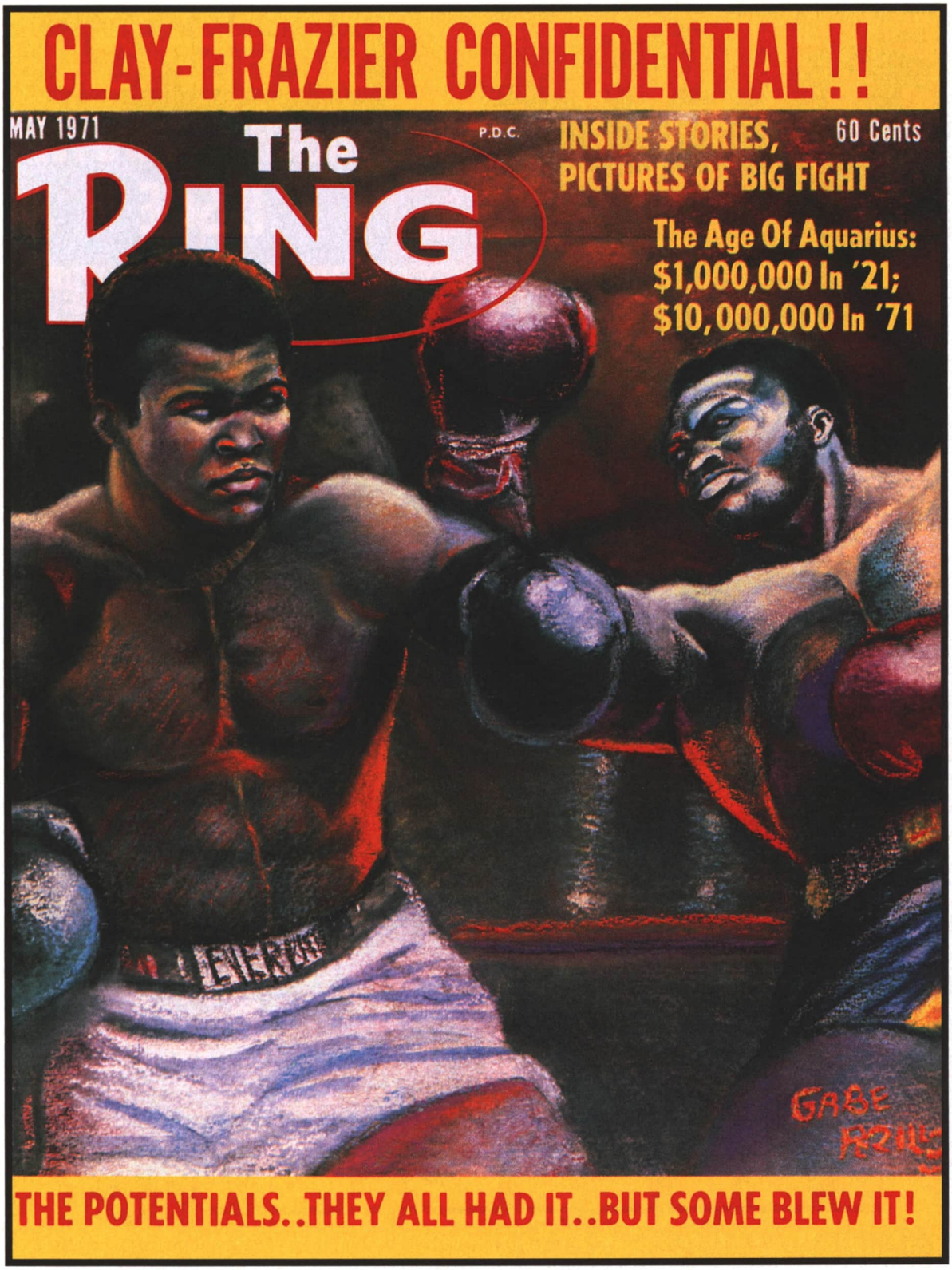

**Date:** June 1966
**Cover:** Cartoon of Ali appealing to Uncle Sam
**Why Ali, why this issue?** Ali was at a crossroads in his career. The world heavyweight champ was about to be stripped of his title for his refusal to enter the United States military during the Vietnam War, but he defiantly held his ground.

**Cover Story:** Ali told RING Editor Nat Fleischer that he wasn't about to change his mind and give in to the demands of the public and U.S. government in a story headlined, "Invite Uncle Sam's Amity? 'I Can't,' Clay Tells RING." Dan Daniel wrote that Ali's victory over George Chuvalo helped repair some of the damage done by Ali-Sonny Liston II in Lewiston, Maine, which cast boxing in a dubious light. But Ali's tangle with the U.S. government placed the heavyweight division in a potential quandary if the rightful champion were banned.



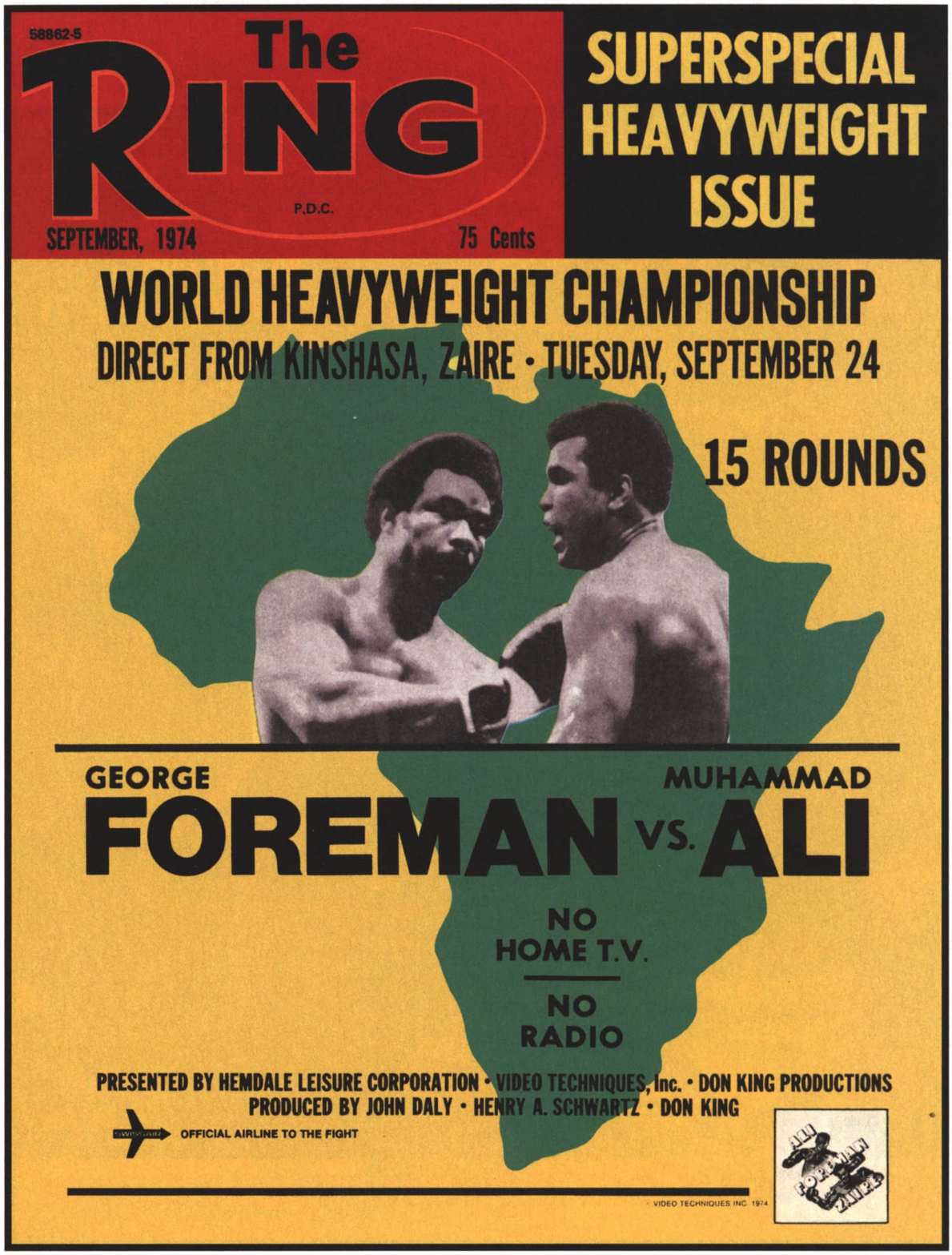

**Date:** December 1966
**Cover:** A LeRoy Neiman painting of Ali
**Why Ali, why this issue?** Ali may have held the sports world's most prestigious title as world heavyweight champion, but he was a nomad looking for a venue when the fight with Ernie Terrell was broached. At the time, state athletic commissions were hesitant to issue a boxing license to Ali in light of his refusal to be inducted into the U.S. military.

**Cover Story:** The anticipated Muhammad Ali-Ernie Terrell fight was looking for a home. New York City's brand new Madison Square Garden was a possibility, but Ali had to first get licensed. In the story titled "Clay vs. Terrell In New York Rests On Texas' Reaction" by Dan Daniel, Edwin Dooley, chairman of the New York State Athletic Commission, had large concerns about public sentiment against Ali's stance on the Vietnam War and the pending result of his fight against Cleveland Williams, in the Astrodome, in Houston, Texas.



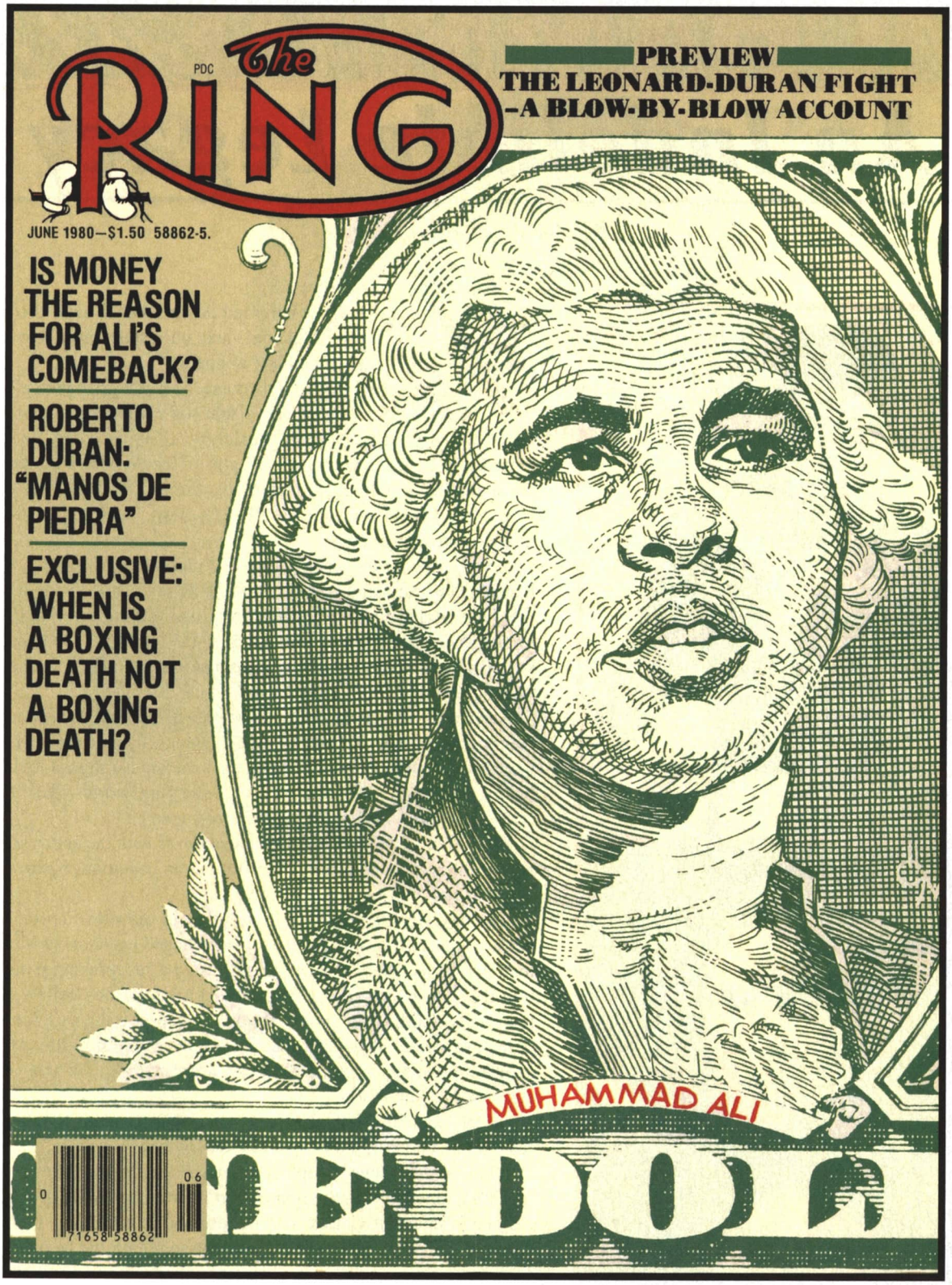

**Date:** May 1971
**Cover:** Illustration of Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali by Gabe Perillo
**Why Ali, why this issue?** The "Fight of the Century," between undefeated world heavyweight champion Joe Frazier and former world heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali finally took place, with Frazier earning a unanimous decision. The two split what until then was the otherworldly amount of $5 million. It was also a defining time for both fighters and the beginning of one of the greatest trilogies in the sport's history.

**Cover Story:** "Though Joe's Win Decisive, Many Questions Unanswered" by Dan Daniel, addressed the aftermath of the Frazier-Ali battle, including whether or not Ali could have defeated Frazier four years ago, before his exile. Immediate rumors began surfacing about a rematch, possibly at the Forum, in Inglewood, California, which was owned by Jack Kent Cooke, one of the backers of Frazier-Ali I.




**Date:** September 1974
**Cover:** Muhammad Ali, George Foreman
**Why Ali, why this issue?** This issue previewed one of the most memorable heavyweight fights in a decade that was full of them, the Ali-Foreman clash in Kinshasa, Zaire. Ali went on to shock the world again with an eighth-round knockout, joining Floyd Patterson as the only two heavyweights to ever regain the championship.

**Cover Story:** Foreman and Ali each contributed stories explaining why they would win "The Rumble in the Jungle." Foreman was counting on a short fight and wrote that he had no doubts about the outcome. "In a way, it is too bad," Foreman wrote. "Muhammad Ali has been good for boxing and I hate to see him go. But, like all else, eras must end. He's had his run and now it's my turn." Ali countered by pointing out that "only five times in Foreman's career has he gone over five rounds. That doesn't give him much ring time and there have been questions about his ability to go 10 or 15 rounds against a major opponent."



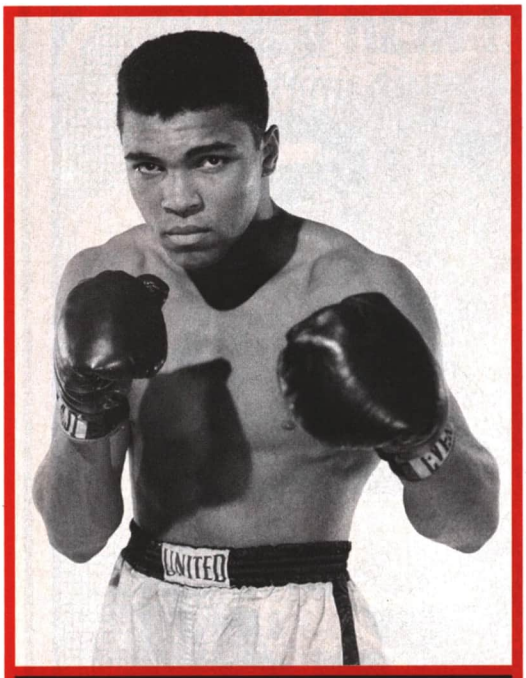

**Date:** June 1980
**Cover:** Muhammad Washington
**Why Ali, why this issue?** Ali was at the end of this career, yet still thinking he had some magic left in his aged fists. At 39, though, his quickness and agility were all but gone. This marked the ugly stage in Ali's downward spiral in which he began taking the same exit many former greats took—refusing to acknowledge that the end was upon them.

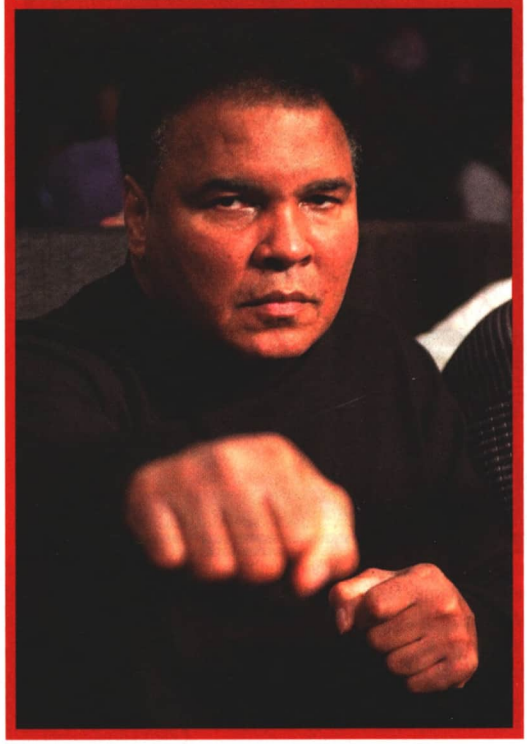
**Cover Story:** THE RING asked if Ali's comeback was driven by money in a provocative piece by Barney Nagler titled "Is It Moolah That Takes Muhammad Back Up The Mountain?" Nagler questioned how great Ali was, proclaiming Jack Dempsey, Gene Tunney, Joe Louis, and Rocky Marciano would have beaten him, and that Joe Frazier, Ken Norton, and Leon Spinks actually did. Now a chubby Ali was mounting another comeback, aimed at Mike Weaver and former sparring partner Larry Holmes. Nagler also raised the prescient point that some people close to Ali were becoming increasingly apprehensive about his welfare.

# MUHAMMAD Ali

# An Indelible Legacy

*By Michael Rosenthal*





Muhammad Ali might've been the best-known—and, ultimately, most beloved—athlete in history.

Of course, he was a great boxer. Many believe that his combination of speed, savvy and grit has never been equaled by a heavyweight. He was a remarkable 22-2 in championship fights in the division's golden era, becoming the first to regain the title two times.

Indeed, when Ali said he was "The Greatest," he meant it. And, in time, no one disagreed.

He also played the leading role in a number of all-time classics, including his stunning upset of menacing Sonny Liston to win his first title in 1964; his epic trilogy with arch rival Joe Frazier, highlighted by the savage "Thrilla in Manila" in 1975; and his "rope-a-dope" knockout of menacing George Foreman to regain the title the first time in 1974.

The drama of such battles could be seen in the ring. However, Ali's magnetic personality and out-of-the-ring antics—predicting knockouts in poems, playfully belittling opponents—before his fights lifted mere boxing matches to must-see events for everyone worldwide.

We have seen nothing like him before or since.

Still, Ali was much more than a great boxer with the ability to connect with millions of people. He also was an important figure in the anti-war and civil rights movements.

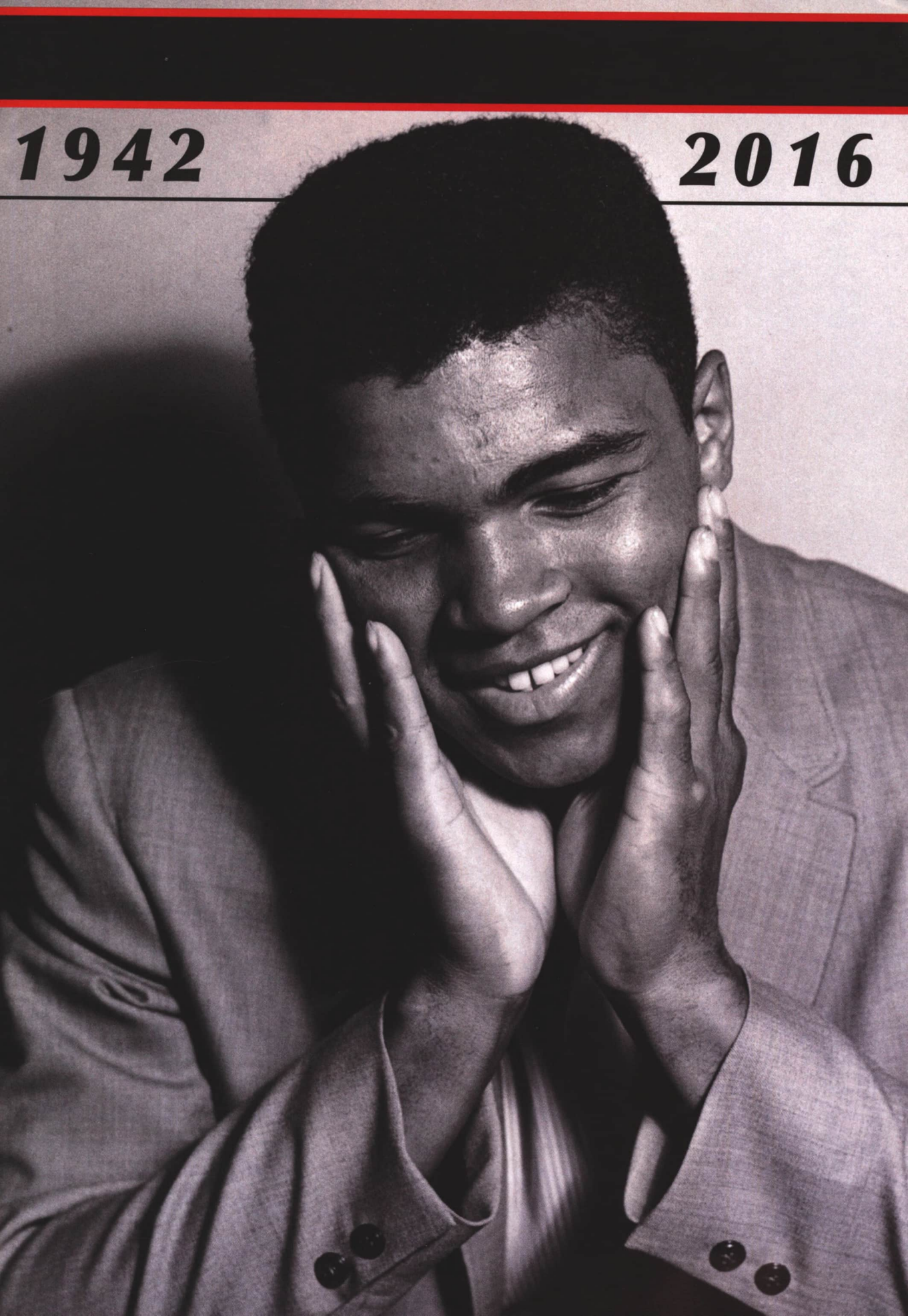
The day after he defeated Liston to win the title Cassius Clay declared that he was a Muslim and had changed his name to Muhammad Ali. Three years later, he was arrested after refusing induction into the U.S. Armed Forces because of his religious beliefs at the risk of serving time in prison. He didn't step into the ring for three of his peak years while he fought a more far-reaching battle. Ali was scorned by many who saw him as a draft dodger while others admired his conviction.

"Why should they ask me to put on a uniform and go 10,000 miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people," he said, "while so-called Negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs?"

Ultimately, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in his favor, giving him his most-important victory, and he returned to boxing in 1970. Ali had lost a step but was still good enough to regain the heavyweight crown twice more.

Alas, he declined significantly in the late '70s and fought for the last time in 1981. The animosity he engendered among some during the Vietnam War began to fade by this time, and he was well on his way to becoming a beloved icon late in his life, cheered wherever he went.

Ali left an indelible legacy as a great athlete with uncommon charm and the courage to fight for what he believed was right. ■


1942
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I'd like for them to say:

He took a few cups of love.

He took one tablespoon of patience,

One teaspoon of generosity,

One pint of kindness.

He took one quart of laughter,

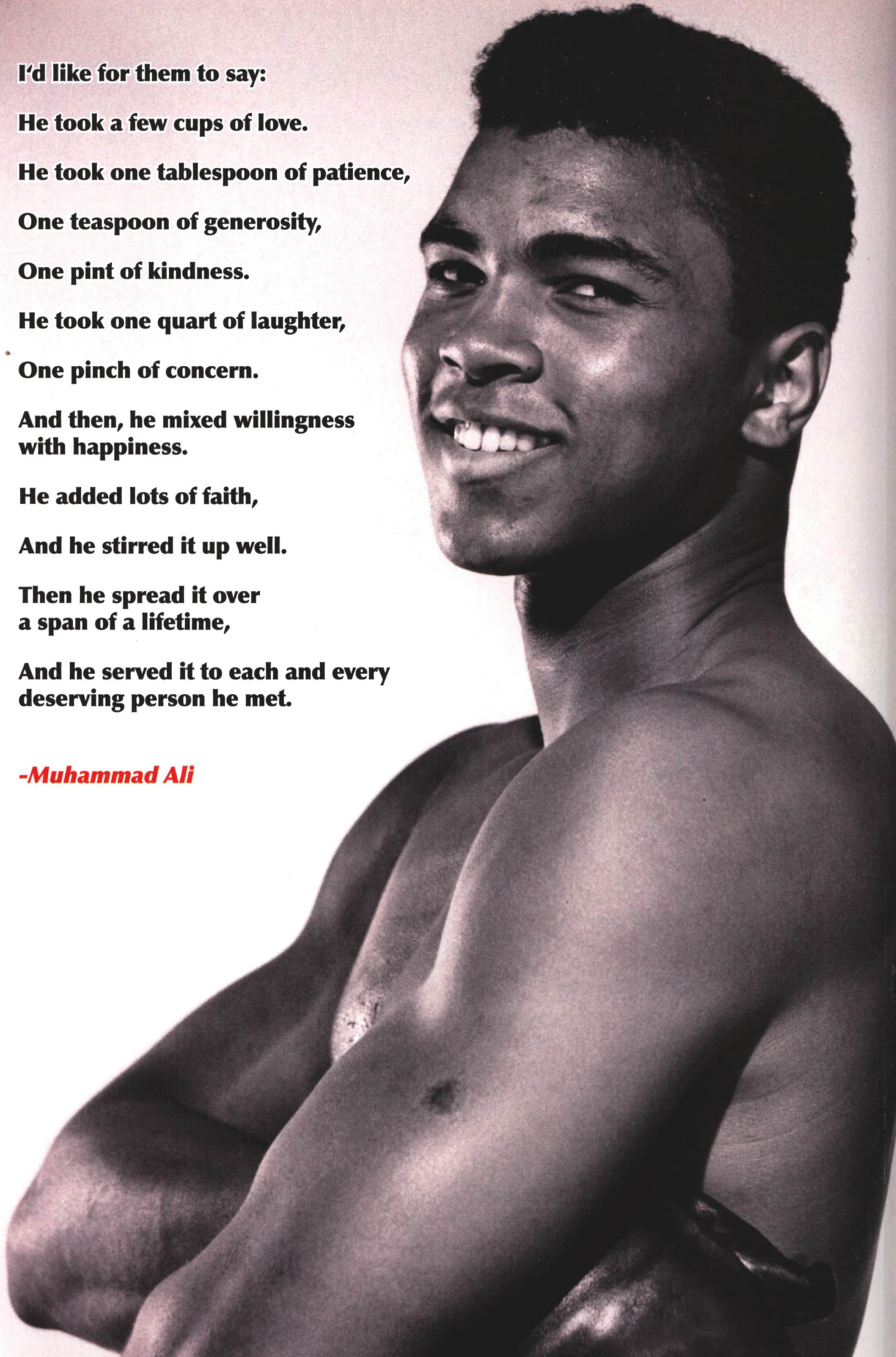
One pinch of concern.

And then, he mixed willingness
with happiness.

He added lots of faith,

And he stirred it up well.

Then he spread it over
a span of a lifetime,

And he served it to each and every
deserving person he met.

*-Muhammad Ali*